

On Tasks of Civic Education in Belarus*

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"Why have we been engaged in civic education for 15 years, but the situation is getting worse? What are the reasons of such a low performance? What goals should civic educational organizations in Belarus set?" Those were the questions raised during the round-table discussion by the leading Belarusian organizations involved in civic education: "What should civic education in Belarus look like?"

Though the evaluation of one's own performance was more in emotional way (efficiency evaluation of the activities of public organizations is the topic of another discussion), an attempt to rethink what has been done over deserves intent consideration and an open discussion. Let me share my point of view on this account.

Before I start considering the tasks of civic education in modern Belarus, let's recollect the aims of education itself. What does education in Belarus look like today?

Big Encyclopedic Dictionary gives the following definition: "EDUCATION — the process of personal development connected with mastering socially essential experience gained by the humanity and embodied in knowledge, skills, creative activities, and emotional and value treatment of the world; a necessary condition of preserving and developing material and spiritual culture". In principle, this is a good and correct definition, but it often happens that behind wise and scientific definitions we forget about the main thing: "What for?"

The wolf teaches her cubs to hunt so that they could survive in this world. A primitive man studied how to earn his/her daily bread, seek shelter from bad weather, and make instruments. Just because the humanity has undergone a long way of evolution and we have become more civilized, the main aim of the education hasn't changed: to teach a person to be competitive in this world so that he / she could provide himself / herself with an adequate level of quality of living. To put it in simpler terms we learn to survive again and again (for pessimists) or live a beautiful life (for optimists) the way we did thousands years ago.

A human being does not live alone, but in social groups. It's a historical fact that not all the social groups survived till these days. A lot of states, people, civilizations disappeared from the face of the earth. As a result of group competitions only those survived whose customs, traditions, moral norms, values, and social institutions promoted survival. Simply those groups survive which behave in a required way. Here comes the second goal of education: to preserve and improve competitive traditions, norms of behaviour, and values that ensure survival and a certain quality of life in social groups.

What are we taught these days, whether this up-to-date system of education promotes competitiveness of a person and social groups? If we take a closer look at modern secondary school that provides the society with the system of general education, one can't help noticing that it tends to an academic character. Our children are taught what constitutes the basis of scientific knowledge: Languages, Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Biology, History, etc.

Maybe the knowledge of what RNA is or where Zimbabwe is situated was important for my all-round

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development as a person, but since I finished school I haven't had any opportunity to use this knowledge in practice for 25 years. Indeed, neither at school nor at the institute I was provided with socially significant experience of the humanity that I use in my everyday life and that promotes the growth of my competitiveness and the quality of life.

We are not taught to communicate and speak in public, solve conflicts, plan our own life and activities, manage our family budget, choose quality foodstuffs or goods when buying them, persist in our opinion and respect other people's point of view, uphold our rights, etc. I even don't say anything about the list of knowledge, skills, and qualities that are determined by such notions as "leadership" and "enterprise". Modern school aims at spreading knowledge of as big volume as it's possible, but it doesn't teach to generate new information. It neither teaches creativity. We are not taught the main thing in this life, i.e. to be responsible for ourselves, for our individual development, and to be active in this process.

Throughout long history mankind has accumulated such great amount of knowledge that not a single man in the world is able to master it physically as lifespan is so short. That is why it's absolutely not important whether you know where Zimbabwe is or not. It's more essential whether you can make use of a map. Tests that are aimed at revealing aptitudes for remembering mathematical formulae are senseless. The ability to use reference books and think represents more valuable skills required in everyday life. Finally, the ability of a person to find out what he / she personally considers to be vital and whether he / she is able to organize his / her activity to reach his / her priorities is the most important.

"KONWLEDGE FOR EVERY DAY" – here's the sphere of knowledge that, to my regret, formal education does not provide us with. This vacuum should be filled with non-formal education that is carried out by social educational organizations as well.

What about the second goal of education, i.e. teaching norms and values in the life of the society? This question is much more complicated as speaking about culture and values we speak about the things that can't be rationally grounded. Different social groups have different points of view on the acceptable norms and values. Religious education, party education, national and cultural education – all these educational institutions deal with values, norms, and culture. At times they are diametrically opposite.

Nonetheless it's vitally important for us to study "art of living together" (Plato). Civic education has to teach a citizen how to live in a modern society. It has to teach him / her how to take part in common activities making decisions on local and state issues together with other members. Thus there's a question: what should be the value basis of education?

Modern western society has reached a consensus on the idea that such values are democracy, freedom, and human rights. In this sense modern civic education in western countries is synonymous to educating democracy. Citizens, who can make a wise and rational choice, can think critically, those who understand the meaning of a right, are tolerant to political opponents, people who can analyze the information provided by mass media in a critical way, who are keenly interested in social and political life.

The main aim of civic education abroad is to obtain necessary and sufficient information on political system within the country, education in the sphere of civic and political culture. One should be aware of what the Constitution of the country, political system, essence and dilemmas of democracy, and human rights, and mechanisms of their protection are. This is the background on the basis of which concrete models of civic education that depend on the national traditions are drawn. Civic education in western countries rests on certain ethical principles. Among them there's patriotism, respect for an individuality of another person, inadmissibility of coercion and conformism.

What is the state of civic education in Belarus?

Today we live in the society with no consensus on the question of basic values. One part of the society believes in ideals of social justice, greater equality, social security that are exercised due to a strong state power, planned economy, and antagonism against private entrepreneur. The other part of the society champions the ideals of democracy, freedom, and human rights.

In this case two competing systems of civic education have appeared on the basis of two values systems. On the one hand, the powerful authority that staked on the first part of the society and is actively creating the system of "ideological education". Within the framework of this system citizens are taught in the spirit of loyalty towards the state authority, a display of unconditional support for the line of policy which is being carried out. At the same time priority is given to convictions and creation of an attractive image of reality, not knowledge and skills.

On the other hand, a part of social organizations has created an informal system of civic education within the framework of which citizens are taught democracy; they are educated how to take part in the life of the society on the local level as well as on the national one. Nowadays within the bounds of the existing political system and culture the system of informal civic education is viewed as a threat to the authority, an intrusion into the process of the state decision-making. It's not without reason that holding educational seminars and sponsoring them are placed →

on the same footing as "carrying out an activity aimed at changing the constitutional system in the Republic of Belarus, a take-over or an overthrow of the state authority" in a number of legislative ordinances (e.g. the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus №300 01.07.2005).

It goes without saying that there are political parties that aim at changing the regime and are preparing new legislative initiative including making changes in the Constitution. Within the framework of these activities they are busy holding educational events alongside some other work. "Change of the regime" has never, however, been and cannot be the goal of **civic** education. This is the goal to be reached by the political parties that are created in accordance with the existent legislation. To reach the goal they make use of their methods and technologies.

One shouldn't confuse education for the sake of taking part in elections with the aim of coming into power (this is the aim of political parties) with education for the sake of taking part in elections as an element of culture manifesting itself in making a collective decision about priority issues for the society. Democratic institutions themselves, one of which is elections, do not mean anything without democratic culture within the society. In his time Hitler came to power in the course of free and democratic elections. He held four referendums which he afterwards won. We all remember what the end of it was. Recently the terrorist organization "Hamas" has come to power as a result of the elections. It's not difficult to win the elections; it's more difficult to win on the level of values.

Thus our citizens have to live in time of clashes with different culture and value norms. **The aim of civic education in Belarus today is to preserve all the best traditions of the past and to help citizens to master new norms of behaviour that a demanded by the change of living conditions.** So one shouldn't keep making the same mistakes and teach for the sake of the mythical "bright future". In spite of the forms this future is imagined. We shouldn't follow foreign experience blindfold and teach our citizens the things one can't use today. Non-formal civic education as a rule has to do with adult education. If an adult cannot use the acquired knowledge in practice during the month after the course then this information is forgotten and education is senseless. Civic education must be practical and rely on already existing norms, traditions, and experience.

What **"practices"** should non-formal civic education in Belarus give priority to nowadays, when teaching citizens **"art of living together"**? In my opinion, we should pay close attention to the most spread citizen unions and teach them norms of effective cooperation in accordance with their current needs.

From my point of view, the most widely spread, influential, and, consequently, priority target group is the **family.** What are the principles of cooperation of citizens of different genders, ages, and beliefs in a family? How are decisions made in a family today? What are the principles of keeping house? Is family budget open for every member of a family? Educating effective norms of behaviour in a small group (as the family is), effective means of communal life and work are spheres of knowledge that can rouse a keen response within the target group; these spheres bear a wider practical importance and are abundant space for the development of different democracy practices.

The next target group is a group of people who live together. Especially if these groups are formed in housing cooperatives and condominiums. Today when the state is more and more declining the responsibilities for care taken of the dwelling surrounding of the citizens, it's more vital for people to study how to assume this responsibility and organize communal work on provision of amenities for the environment they live in.

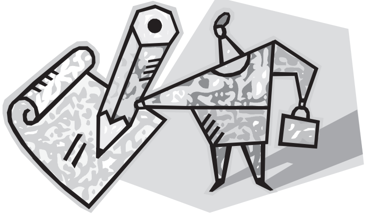
Finally, the next target group that is as developed and powerful is formal and non-formal unions of the citizens who share common interests. So regarding the target group one shouldn't restrict the choice with public association and initiatives only. There are various kinds of parents' committees at schools, guardianship boards, youth teams of Club of Joyful and Resourceful, professional unions, clubs, creative circles, etc. Whatever the aims of these associations are they all need to be taught effective methods of their activity organization as they are the representatives of culture of active participation of citizens in life of their communities.

Aristotle reckoned that "An absolute notion «citizen» can be best of all defined through presence in court and authority". It goes without saying that participation in elections to the representational body is the most strongly pronounced form of citizens' participation in life of the state. One shouldn't forget or ignore it. Elections nonetheless take place one time in 5 years. It's very difficult to teach citizens political culture and norms of participation in public life on the basis of so rarely used practice. "DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES FOR EVERY DAY" – this is the highlight that organizations of civic education in Belarus should keep to at present.

I have no doubts about the potential of the existing system of non-formal civic education as the experience obtained, methods and specialists can provide working out educational programs adequate for modern requirements. The key question that remains open is: how to make civic education a mass phenomenon? How to give every citizen regardless of his / her age, gender, level of education an opportunity to finish a course within the framework of the system of civic education?

Translated by Olga Verbova

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The History and Current State of civic education in Belarus*

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The latest period of the history of civic education in Belarus is already over 10 years old. In fact, 2006 was a year for reviewing and assessing the results of the activity conducted by our educators and all those involved in the process, as the results of civic education become clear in a real, active situation, when citizens can be expected to show their civic qualities. Also being assessed are the results of the reflection and thinking of those formulating and implementing the aims of civic enlightenment. These reflecting subjects might be politicians, political analysts, leaders of governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the teachers and educators themselves. Thinking cannot permit any self-deception and lies. Reflection and thinking based on objectives and assumptions that derive from unreliable values and logic will produce false conclusions, and therefore errors in implementation. Erroneous reflection conducted in the past paves the way for mistakes to be repeated in the future, means the aims of civic education are unachievable, and results in them being ousted by slogans, ideologems or myths.

The situation in March 2006 and the whole of the preceding period needed from the people of Belarus to take civic action, adopt a position, appreciate the disposition of forces in live political situations, and to act in accordance with common human values. And to take action for victory — genuine action, rather than a pretence of it. Victory was essential (as in the song — one for all), a victory over increasingly strong and stable authoritarianism and totalitarian Soviet thinking, victory of good over evil. The situation in 2005-2006 was a summons to the people of Belarus, who are still, in the twenty-first century and in the heart of Europe, living under authoritarian rule, gradually adapting and becoming accustomed to this way of living, and finding ways to justify both their inactivity and their reluctance to think and define themselves.

Soviet education did not teach people how determine themselves and think independently, but in the early 1990s the people of Belarus were given a chance to dream, to believe and think out loud, to define themselves, to value diversity and take positive action. But the Soviet system needed wholesale reform. This was the SYSTEM. The difficulty was that reforms needed to be based on democratic and humanitarian principles, which were totally unlike, and antagonistic to, communist principles. New democratic approaches and norms needed to be understood and adopted, interpreted and converted into action. This should have been done primarily by those claiming to be leading the democratization of Belarus, in other words, the reformers themselves. But the 1990s made plain the lack of the necessary intellectual, communications, and professional qualifications amongst either the reformers or the majority of the population.

There was a clear shortage of humanitarian, professional and civic education. Naturally, this needed to be remedied, and both state and informal structures did in fact begin to do so. But the result of educational technologies is not always immediately apparent, especially in the field of civic politics and management. It takes years, or even decades. The result can be seen only in certain artificially created conditions, through the organization of a systemic, technological and reflection-based program of activity in the sphere of education. Moreover, the problem of civic education cannot be solved by civil society structures and informal education alone. It is common knowledge that considerable resources, both intellectual and material, are needed. Neither the state nor the new non-governmental organizations had sufficient resources in the early 1990s, so civic education first came into being in an elemental and impulsive way. By the mid-1990s, given the favorable development of events, this elemental force might have

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developed into clear-cut, planned and orderly activity, preserving the diversity and uniqueness of subjects of education, teaching methods and so on. However, for several reasons, this did not happen:

1. The weakness and unclear objectives of structures of the third sector. Informal education was only just being created and taking shape in the 1990s. Educators in the early 1990s were innovators, feeling their way in the dark. Their aims were not yet clear, but the time was right for taking action. The lack of clear aims was a legacy of the Soviet period and continues to affect us even now. So activity preceded aims, instead of which an educational ideologem was formally put forward – the rounded and developed individual given civic education is a citizen. In essence, this is a declaration of some very important things, heavy with meaning. But there has been no considered exposition of their deeper substance.

This formal declaration was taken as sufficient basis for initiating action. But this formal, declarative approach has played a nasty trick on the non-formal education system and in reality, it deters people rather than attracting them to the civic education system. For formalism, played over and over like a cracked record, leaves no room for reflection and investigation of the essence of things. At the same time, the non-formal education system is amassing layer upon layer of assorted intellectual and symbolic ideologems: national rebirth, civil society and politics, private and intellectual property, organizational development and so on.

I do not intend to pass judgment on the way that non-formal education has progressed over the last ten years. The fact of civil illiteracy in 2006 speaks for itself. The superficiality and shallowness of democratic and behavioral norms has been exposed. In 2004 the Agency for Humanitarian Technologies[1] invited representatives of the third sector to join in the process of developing a Strategy for Victory at the 2006 elections. The volume of inter-professional, personal and virtual communications during work on this task rose tenfold. Internet forums effectively became an experimental research arena for the study of the communications reaction to constructive strategic proposals. Real "live" communications confirmed and duplicated the reactions seen on the Internet. What put the brakes on cooperation was the inadequacy of contributions made by "interested" subjects and leaders of the third sector on either the role of civil society, or the interaction of civil society with political subjects. There was plenty to hear. That we haven't got things right, that civil society should not engage in politics, that the third sector is civil society and that it should therefore control politicians. The question of who gives them the right to take control did not even come up for discussion. And why the need to control, rather than exert influence on politicians' activities? What is meant by politics anyway? A dirty business? The activities of a few prominent individuals within a small circle of people? What sort of procedure is the control of civil society? It was impossible to make out what these leaders thought about the nature of politics, political technology, expertise or strategy.

As a result of this intellectual and procedural mayhem, the opposition and third sector was unable to get to grips with the pressing task of the moment or to get a feel for the situation; it gave rise to displays of imposture, leaving them unable to consolidate and cooperate, to conduct talks, or conclude agreements. On the one hand, words were uttered declaring the principles of democracy, freedom of speech and responsibility. Yet what was actually on show was conformity, subordination, anarchy, egocentrism, a rejection of alternative views, and an inability to listen to and hear opponents, or engage in effective communication. Personal opinion and sentiment, not logically argued judgment, took precedence over dealing with an issue that will determine the fate of the whole country. Yet the principle of humanism was confirmed as a good thing, even though it results in restraint and stagnation instead of addressing current problems. See how everything has been turned head over heels! As far as their way of thinking and behaving are concerned, the structures of the third sector and the opposition are wholly indistinguishable from the representatives of the power still implementing Soviet principles of control.

Some may accuse me of excessive generalization or of being wrongheaded and "unscientific" in these assessments. But Agency experts used one of the most effective methods for studying this situation – the reflective method for the study of action[2].

We took action, with the aim of winning, already having a Strategy, understanding the difficulty of implementing the given objectives, understanding that victory can only be won collectively and jointly, understanding too that separatism and secrecy are very powerful… But we had no method for how we should actually start to act, to propose and establish communications, to break down barriers. With only a year to go until the elections, it was senseless to start preparing a basis for complex sociological research and then passively to observe what happened. So the method came into being through action in the form of Organizational Activity Games (Kiev, March 2005), discussions, close examination of analytical materials based on monitoring, methodological and educational seminars and so on. Only through such independent and purposeful action is it possible to check and validate research-based hypotheses in a dynamic pre-election situation.

[1] The Agency for Humanitarian Technologies is a public organization established in 1994 under the leadership of methodologist V.V. Matskevich. The Agency's mission is the implementation in Belarus of a cultural policy based on principles of democracy, systemic thinking activity and professionalism. The Agency's main areas of activity are intellectual consulting, expertise and effective action in the spheres of political technology, education, media and business.

[2] Matskevich V. The study of action // Questions of Methodology, Nr 1–2, 1996.

The effect of such a humanitarian study of action is naturally to produce great changes in the people taking part in the activity. Secrets are uncovered, some people develop, others become more inclined to reflection, some start to act, and others become inhibited or behave according to habit. Those who develop and are capable of change subsequently form the backbone of the leadership corpus of the third sector, set a trend for intelligent activity and become authorities. And such "new" people did appear. They are perhaps not yet very prominent, numerous, thrusting or loud, but they are there and are already having an effect. At the same time, inertia has apparently set into political and civic action, with a powerful resistance to all that is new and untraditional. The forms of civil behavior seen, such as holding Congresses, regional assemblies and elections of sole candidates in breach of democratic procedures, have been strongly reminiscent of 2001.

The reason for the mass inertia and traditionalism in civil behavior can be found in the ideas about and attitudes to all previous forms of civic education. Civic education has substituted new democratic norms for traditional pedagogical methods without any consideration of the mindset of the people of Belarus. It has therefore run up against the deep-rooted old way of life, the appeal of simple, primitive habits and customs, and the power of the state's education policy and its guaranteed resources. This Soviet mindset continues to affect not only the majority of the population but also the leaders themselves. New democratic norms can only take hold if the old ones are dismantled and subjected to criticism, and if new innovatory methods are used to work on people's consciousness, while demonstrating the democratic way of life and putting it into political practice. Civic education is needed to shape and cultivate a type of civic behavior that is not practiced by the majority, and has no firm tradition in Belarusian society. Though inadequate, models for mass democratic and civil behavior in Belarus do exist. Educators in civic education need to examine these models and use them as the substance and material of education. And their own behavior needs to reinforce these models, demonstrating their adherence to the principles of democracy, not so much in words as in deeds.

2. The second reason for the ineffectiveness of civic education in Belarus was the legislative and actual inequality of the subjects of education. The field of civic education involves not only subjects of informal education, but also the state subject. The state has never neglected the problem of civic education and never will. This is determined by the very position of the state as a subject, possessing power. Unlike other subjects, the state has substantial resources for action – manpower, professional, financial and material. And it is due only to its resource of power (the administrative resource) that the state is able to exist and remain unchanged, whatever organizational or managerial difficulties it might face.

Over the course of the last 15 years, there have been several changes in the state's priorities for its educational aims. But these show a distinct logic:

- 1991 to 1994 – preparation for educational reform and adaptation to Belarus's new independence. Various proposals and versions of the aims of education – from the teaching of thought or national self-determination, to practical skills and so on.
- 1994 to 1997 – formal declaration of reform, and of principles of humanitarianisation and humanisation, a fashion for new educational technologies. In practice – the launch of a revanchist program (reversion), retention of old Soviet educational principles under cover of an expansion of teaching hours, a strengthening of multidisciplinary teaching processes, a curb on the Belarusification and intellectualization of education, and either elimination of private educational establishments or their complete subordination to the state system. Control and scrutiny of the activities of non-governmental educational organizations and the creation of dependency on state decisions, by means of a procedure for registration and re-registration. The beginning of patriotic upbringing processes. Symbolically, this period concluded with the closure of the Soros Fund.
- 1997 to 2006 – gradual and steady roll-out of patriotic upbringing programs. Establishment of the Belarusian Youth Union (BRSM), facultative (optional) courses, obligatory political instruction, ideologization. The assertion that patriotic upbringing is civic education. Standardisation and consolidation of the politics of teaching, elimination of educational processes (in particular, humanitarian)[3].

A 10-point system for the assessment of knowledge, and centralized testing, as mechanisms to consolidate trends towards the formalization of teaching; the unreflecting nature of the pedagogical community. A fashion for control and monitoring of the quality of education, which in fact creates a mechanism for fighting dissident thinking. Repeal of all reforms. Complete elimination of the independence and autonomy of educational establishments. Legislative backing for the existing educational system. Skilful use by the state of market mechanisms in education, by means of the compulsory introduction of additional educational services. Total victory for paradigms for modernizing Soviet education Belarus-style. Speeches by Ministry of Education officials are full of talk of universal higher education (?), that retains the principle of social justice; administrative control with respon-

[3] In the theory of modern pedagogic, teaching, upbringing and education are quite distinct from each other in their intention and outcomes. Teaching (обучение) is the transmission of knowledge, ability and skills. Education (образование) is the formation of modes of thinking and self-determination. Upbringing (воспитание) – is the process of forming the values and aims that condition standards and modes of behavior.

sibility transferred to the teacher (in reality, a mechanism for collective irresponsibility); the effectiveness of the contract system; the priority of upbringing over teaching, and of the principle of polytechnism over education's humanitarian content. Slowly but surely, the broad sweep of education is being eroded.

Naturally, only a strong subject – with independence of intellect and resources, capable of presenting its own considered program for civic education, attracting a substantial number of pedagogues, adults and students, and acting in line with clear concepts, in a coordinated, open way – can resist such a powerful program of state revanchism. On the intellectual level, but not in terms of resources, this might potentially be a system of non-formal education. But the majority of third sector organizations in Belarus were not established with a view to coordinating their activities with the state sector. The third sector has led its own independent life, other subjects in the field of education have failed to conduct any systemic reflection, and it has not been recognized that the state is staging an aggressive and deliberate policy of revanchism. Many non-governmental organizations still think the state sector is the place for realizing their principles of democratic education. This short-sightedness amongst third sector educators actually means that the specific aims of civic education are failing, and it works in favor of the aims and tasks of the state's totalitarian system. It is becoming extremely difficult to work in the state arena without losing sight of the real aims for democratizing education, or jeopardizing reflective processes and the educators' clear self-determination, unless educators are highly skilled in game-based reflection, with real academic status, and substantial resources. What is more, the state sector has learnt to make clever use of third sector resources by means of procedures for the registration of projects, secret agreements and so on.

The only things with which the third sector can resist the state's policy on patriotic upbringing are the real (not distorted and inverted) substance and purpose of civic education, skilful propaganda, clarification, the confident self-determination of educators and extensive promotion and dissemination of models of democratic behavior. There is therefore a dramatically increased demand for educators to be qualified in the sort of strategic and tactical thinking that embraces not only oneself but all the other subjects in the field – thinking that can consider friends and foes, make a reasonable assessment of one's own actions and those of others, and work out an effective, business-like course of action at any given moment, based on a clear understanding of options, availability of resources and the scope for activity.

3. It would be a mistake to ignore the so-called western factor in the management of the civil sector in Belarus. This western focus is necessary and very important in this post-Soviet period. The lack of resources for civic education in the early 1990s could simply not have been remedied without help from western partners. But what was needed was a relationship of partnership, not subordination.

Partnership relations assume the existence of two subjects with different objectives, in our case, western organizations and Belarusian organizations. The difference between their aims is dictated by spatial, territorial and regional differences. The partners may be drawn together by a set of common values and principles, for example, a commitment to democracy, globalization, or the protection of the environment. But, as a point of principle, these aims cannot be identical for the western and Belarusian participants in the process. Partnership relations are established through communication, and the identification of differences and common elements in the aims of their activity. As a result of this communication, a zone of responsibility takes shape for each partner, safeguarding specifics (the principle of subsidiarity), and agreements are reached for the exchange and mutual provision of resources to help achieve the aims of both sides.

Belarusian civic organizations' lack of defined aims and structures in the early 1990s produced a situation in which the western partners began to offer not only financial resources, but also their own values and aims. The Belarusian side contributed almost nothing to the aims of these projects, only offering manpower to work on the aims and tasks set by the western side. Belarus thus became the stage for the introduction of democracy, but there was no Belarusian subject, which is fundamentally contrary to the principles of partnership. For a period of 15 years, therefore, no cultural norm for democratic society developed in the third sector. Instead, there developed a destructive tendency for everyone to listen to and indulge their western partners, setting up organizations first and only later thinking about their aims, and adapting to democratic standards which had evolved in the particular conditions prevailing historically in Europe and America, but not in Belarus. A tendency also developed to replace or veil democracy with communist and nationalist principles. At an Organizational Activity Game in Kiev (March 2005) and a seminar of the Association for Civic Education in January 2006, trainers and participants judged this approach to be ill-considered (on both sides), and unsuited to the specific dynamics of the Belarusian situation.

The western partners already have well-established democracy that has been consolidated and practiced over a long historical period. What representatives of western structures actually pass on is not the building blocks of democracy, but the reduced day to day forms and methods of the democratic way of life. And this is in Belarus, which still has no more than the first seedlings of democracy, which need to be strengthened if they are to survive and spread in the face of stiff competition from the traditional Soviet way of life and thinking. Belarus needs to cultivate and consolidate its cultural foundations and sources of democracy, not these secondary forms and traditional working methods. This lack of synchronization between the western and Belarusian part-

ners renders the activity of Belarus's civic organizations ineffective, reinforces the bankruptcy of their aims, strategy and tactics, and creates a climate in which funding is consumed in senseless competition for resources within the third sector. The aim is nothing, the process is all, and we'll get a result somehow or other. Put crudely, this is an amateurish and sloppy approach to humanitarian work. Against this background, it is impossible to see any professionalism or reflective analysis, and these in fact come to be seen as threatening the existence of the third sector as a whole. It's a Belarusian paradox….

The ineffectiveness of such an approach can be seen not only where it affects substance, but also at a formal level. The number of organizations (both registered and unregistered) is stable or increasing, especially during pre-election campaigns, but the number of activists, participants and involved citizens is falling. The scale of civic education could not possibly be described as massive, however much the pedagogues of civic education might redefine themselves as educators, specialists in organizational development, or trainers. The result still has to be measured against the aims, and the aim of civic education is to create mass civic behavior, based on democratic values and discernible in the standard and non-standard behavioral situations that determine the development of history in a concrete region.

Meanwhile, it must be said that there is an alternative to the unreflecting approach which has been evolving in Belarus for over 10 years. It does not involve many people, is not well-resourced and widespread or having much impact, yet it has a serious theoretical basis, wide-ranging applications and integrity, and uses systemic, realistic thinking. The Systemic Thinking Activity (SMD) approach aims to professionalize civic education, based on ideas about the self-determination of the individual, as well as systems of thinking and activity, reflection and artificial development of social systems through projection and planning (G.P.Schedrovitsky) The trend towards the methodologisation of education and the implementation of a cultural policy in Belarus evolved at the end of the 1980s from Organizational Activity Games (held at Staiki and Raubichi), and became widespread in the sphere of state education in the early 1990s[4].

In 1992, the authors on 'know-how' in educational-methodical complexes, B.V.Palchevsky and L.S.Freedman, were working on the problem of educational standards and understood that in the new conditions it was impossible to address it using traditional methods; serious methodological consultation was needed. Vladimir Matskevich, representative of the methodological movement, was invited to Minsk[5].

In 1992, the first methodological seminar of leaders in the field of education was held at the Institute for the Improvement of Qualifications (IPK), now known as the Academy of Post-Diploma Education (APO), and in 1994 the Agency for Humanitarian Technologies came into being as a social organization engaged in consulting and expert analytical activity in the fields of politics, education, business and the media[6].

Over the last 12 years, within the framework of a systemic thinking activity approach to education, plans have been developed for the reform of Belarusian education in schools, and for professional education (as alternatives to the official system), concepts have been developed for the overhaul of humanitarian education, and for functional literacy, the latter of which in fact predated the introduction of the Bolonsky process in Belarus: there has been a graduate dissertation on the methodology of education (S. Krupnik), and doctoral dissertations on “The modelling of activity by the specialist-professional” (A. Lashuk), and “The theory and practice of training education managers” (S. Matskevich); plans have been developed and implemented for training education managers at the Republican Institute for Vocational Education (RIPO), the Academy of Post-Diploma Education and the Institute for the Improvement of Qualifications (Grodno). At the academic level, new subjects have been developed and introduced to the educational process: “The pedagogic of activity”, “Projection and planning in education”, and “The theory of systems and activity”. In the third sector, methodological education seminars and organizational activity games have repeatedly accompanied political decision-making (Free Trades Unions, Charter-97, the People's University, the Christian party, the “Strategy for Victory” movement). Everywhere that a resource for reflective, non-standard thinking and effective self-determination is needed, methodological services have become relevant and in demand, showing a way forward.

Self-determination, thinking, reflection and behavior can and must be taught – such is the clear message of the activities involved in the sphere of civic education. Civic education is not a market where demand is formed “from below”. Educational aims are derived from culture, ideal values and the problematics of the activity situation, not from the mass desires of the people. Demand for education still needs to be cultivated and shaped, as it will not simply appear naturally. This is all the more so with the demand for civic education, as a form of education capable of resisting the traditions of Soviet ideological education. In Belarus, there is simply no mass demand for civic education. Civic education has always been considered unattractive and its intended aims seem complicated, especially when seen against the background of current pedagogical primitivism and collectivism, since it expects both pedagogues and the other participants in the educational process to take personal responsibility for the results of education.

[4] Krupnik S.A. Methodological approaches in Pedagogics// Pedagogika, 2000, Nr 4.

[5] Matskevich V.V. Polemical studies on education, Liepaya, 1993.

[6] Cultural politics, Nr 0, 1994.

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A citizen is an active person, having commonly-held human values as well as democratic values, equipped to live in a democracy, and make independent decisions, understanding that the future state of society and his own fate depend upon his decisions and behavior. Where there is no democracy, the citizen is someone capable of building it, and building a corresponding type and system of human relationships, able to recognize and foresee threats to democracy, and to find ways to counter these. The qualities of a citizen can be discerned only in corresponding activity and historical situations – elections, public forums, the courts, defense of rights, communications and so on.

An activity situation is characterized by the time and place of its purposeful action. Not all activity situations require thinking. When they are not occurring for the first time, and have become the norm, habitual or traditional, participants in the situation do not need to exercise their intellectual abilities. But the situation in Belarus, where democracy is not yet the traditional form of life for the people, requires consideration of organizational forms and actions, strategic and tactical skills, reflection, the adoption of a position, and a capacity for effective action in ill-defined circumstances. Hence the technological and systemic approach to civic education – it is only possible to teach civic behavior using thinking activity forms of teaching – and in no other way.

Every technology for education has the following elements: educational aims, a subject and object of education, methodic of instruction, the content of education (the answer to the question of what to teach), a phased organization of the process, and a result. A technology is systemic if all these elements are in harmony, without conflict, and correspond logically with one another. The difficulty with the technology of civic education is that civic education needs to be based on activity or at least to simulate it. But activity can only be set and organized by the subject – the educator. The position of the subject as a reflecting individual, capable of formulating educational aims in a cultured and appropriate way, and translating them into methodic of instruction, organization and control of the educational process, is the most important element of civic education. The individual and the subject of an activity are not identical concepts. The subject of an activity is an amalgam of the self-determined individual, an ideal set of aims and motivations, with corresponding qualifications and competencies. In the absence of any of these factors, the subject lacks substance and is incomplete. Within the technological and activity-based approach, the pupil, student or listener is always an object of education, rather than a subject, since he does not possess the ideal aims of education. In place of aims, students have expectations, requirements, wishes and an incomplete picture of the outcome. The object of education is an individual and he cannot suddenly become a subject. Ownership of the criteria for the success and the totality of educational aims always rests with the pedagogue. Pedagogic activity is carried out by the pedagogue, not the pupil. The pedagogue, or educator, is the centre and main subject of civic education.

This theoretical position – utterly simple in our view – is beginning to challenge the loudly trumpeted personality-oriented basis of traditional pedagogic, in which there is in fact confusion over who is who and who is responsible for what in education. The pupil has suddenly become the subject, since he is an individual doing something. As a result, pedagogues in schools are hardly teaching at all – pupils are supposed to learn on their own somehow while pedagogues monitor, control and define requirements. The technological structure of the educational process has changed dramatically. There is less time for imparting and transmitting knowledge, and a greater load on pupils. For some reason, this is considered to be the greatest achievement of humanism in pedagogic. The fashion for this type of humanization and humanitarianisation in civic education means its aims are confused with the expectations and interests of those involved in the process; it removes the educator's obligation to reflect on and formulate educational aims derived from our culture and from analysis of the Belarusian situation; it encourages a mindset in which convenient teaching processes are compulsory in civic education, creates a fear of opposing views on the content of education, and so on. As a result, it is not possible to either set or achieve any aims for civic education; they are simply replaced with the transmission of information, the teaching of methods and so on.

Of what kind of activity is the pupil or student a subject? Activity to acquire knowledge, skills and so on, but nothing of a pedagogical nature. Because, within the framework of a defined educational activity, the individual is the object, it is always necessary to consider his psychological features, develop relevant effective teaching methods and so on. On the other hand, the pedagogue, recognizing that he is dealing with a human object, needs to be all the more accurate, correct, precise and reflective in his pedagogical inventions and innovations. Pedagogue and pupil are united only by the common space or place in which all elements of the educational activity intersect and assemble.

When activity-based pedagogic are conducted in a properly principled way, there arises a question of the legitimacy of the role of educator. What gives a pedagogue the right to become an educator in civic education? Only his own civic position, and his energetic, considered and successful action within Belarus's political situation. The right to be an educator must be perpetually demonstrated and validated. Only a democrat can teach democracy, civil illiteracy can only be eradicated by a literate and experienced pedagogue, the organization of teaching activity can only be done by someone who has experienced it for himself, for real, and reflected upon it so that he knows the next step that he has to prepare people for. The teaching of communication can only be done by someone who is not himself afraid of communicating, or of publicity. The whole history of becoming and functioning as a professional edu-

cator must show adherence to principles of democratism and responsibility, with words matching deeds.

For example, one of our social organizations declared its intention to work for educational reform, to develop plans for democratic reform and do work with pedagogues in schools on national rebirth, democracy and so on. This organisation had extensive foreign links, and had studied the implementation of educational reform in Europe. Imagine my surprise, then, when it set up an educational web-site using models for educational reform from many countries but not Belarus (which can offer at least three). At first sight, this might be attributed to unprofessionalism on the part of the project's managers, but when the same thing happens again in similar situations there can only be one conclusion – that the declared principles of democracy and national rebirth are mere words – the reality is all about comfortable jobs, ambition and narrow interests. The inability to see any home-grown sources of development in Belarus, and the constant use of foreign rather than Belarusian conceptual models, is becoming ingrained, though it runs counter to the principles of Belarusification and democratization. It is unacceptable that educators in civic education should live in Belarus and yet not see or think Belarus; to claim to be managing processes in Belarus without even noticing what already exists.

One of the main requirements of the technology of civic education is that it should be appropriate and pragmatic, produce useful results in the real political situation, and show the way forward. Yet where a situation demands planning, for example, for the maiden, people for some reason start teaching ecology, business or anything else that suits them, except what's needed at the maiden. Still worse, the people doing the teaching do not know what is required for the maiden, but seem merely to be people with money somewhere abroad, such as Lithuania. Have we really come to the point where we have to go to Lithuania to learn how to put up a tent? Certainly, we are in a difficult situation, the powers are gradually creating conditions that are antagonistic to the normal organization of the informal educational process. A law on criminal and administrative responsibility for education was enacted in the pre-election period for strategic and tactical reasons. But if we begin to play by the rules and laws of authoritarian control, we will never be able to do anything anywhere. It is foolish to hope that the authoritarian regime will create conditions favorable for civic education. We are in a state of competition, and one which is unequal and hostile. There is no point in waiting for favorable conditions. So we must look for new reflective gaming forms and methods of working, without in any sense rejecting the original aims of civic education. Spineless seeking of psychological comfort in such conditions is inappropriate, even criminal.

Particular attention should be paid to the methodic of civic education. Technology cannot happen without methodic, but they should be selected to correspond with educational aims, the specifics of the target group and so on. Over the last decade, civic education has accumulated a sizeable archive of teaching methods. The "Educator" journal publishes these with enviable regularity. But the most important requirement of the methodic of teaching is that they should offer an appropriate framework. They themselves have no value if they work without a framework. Methodic is like the kitchen of the educator. On the one hand, he is free to select his methodic, but on the other hand is limited by the precise, contemporaneous and pragmatic nature of his educational aims. For example, the aim of the Organizational Activity Games in Kiev was to develop a strategy for victory and to form the nucleus of a collective subject to implement that strategy. This was relevant at the beginning of 2005, but no later. And the Organizational Activity Games method, with its specific games technology and language is only a form, a means of achieving a given aim.

Unfortunately, sometimes aims are replaced by methodic themselves. Then information is conveyed for the sake of that information, games technology is for the sake of games technology, a Swedish circle is held for the sake of a Swedish circle, and a seminar for the sake of having a seminar. The substance of civic education – the norms and means of civil behavior in situations involving choices – has contradictory elements, is conveyed via the very complex methodic of instruction, and can be absorbed and consolidated only through activity, not words. In the technology of education, everything has its place and meaning. There must be no confusion between the subject and object of education, between methodic and aims, or between the content of education and the teaching material or program. Making distinctions between these elements, bringing them together and making skilful use of them – this is the fundamental technological and systemic requirement of an educator's competence.

March 2006 showed clearly the ineffectiveness of the previous period's civic education systems. But it would be wrong for educators to abandon their aims and work shaping citizens and civil society. On the contrary, this task is more relevant and urgent than ever. After the 2006 elections, almost everything had to be started again from scratch. This has given us extra time, while it is still completely unclear what the next active political events might be. We must make good use of this time. Above all, we must work on our mistakes without making excuses, re-examine the conceptual basis of civic education, redefine what it means to be an educator, how to retrain them and re-equip them with methodological and technical skills. Educators in civic education are becoming leading subjects, and managers of change who need to plan and consolidate the trend towards real democracy in Belarus. To do this, in principle, we have all that we need. We just need to gather it all together and do it in an orderly fashion.

Translated by Chris Ayton (Scotland)

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Non-formal Education Festival Has to Become a Traditional Event

Interview With Asrtid Sahm and Vlad Velichko*

In one of the previous issues (№1(7), 2006) we have already published an interview with representatives of organizing committee of the Festival of non-formal education. Vlad Velichko and Irina Suhiy answered questions of "Educator" about their expectations from the Festival, organization of work of the committee, specificity of preparation of the action of such a level.

Today we offer view of representatives of organizing committee on the preparation and carrying out of the Festival after its ending. **Vlad Velichko,** executive director of the Educational Center "POST" and **Astrid Sahm,** the coordinator of the Program of support of Belarus by the Federal government of Germany share their impressions and estimations.

What's your evaluation of the preparation and carrying out of the Festival?

Vlad

In spite of the fact that an attempt of the organization of such a big event with participation of a plenty of people and organizations was a debut for us, I consider it successful enough. It's not a secret, how complicated it is to organize in our today's conditions such a big frank action. I'm happy that the Festival has passed at a high organizational level and thus has set a model for the future. From my point of view, the success of the Festival was provided by the three major factors: first, the great work executed within several months by the organizing committees and its technical group; secondly — a very high level of interest of participants and their essential input in the program and a table of contents of the Festival (workshops, presentations of editions, an exhibition, etc.). And thirdly — non-realized thirst for an output to qualitatively new level of an experience exchange, professional communication, representation of the services by a wide range of Belarusian educators.

Astrid

In general, from my point of view, the Festival has been organized on a very high level. The wide spectrum of different actions has been offered to participants, from the very beginning they received all the necessary information for self-orientation and making choice on what is the most interesting for them. Therefore, the majority of participants remained satisfied with the results of the Festival.

Has the Festival reached the planned purposes?

Vlad

The basic purposes of the Festival were set in its program documents as understanding of the phenomenon of "non-



formal education" and its value for development of the personality and a society, discussion of prospects and directions of development of non-formal education for youth and adults in Belarus, and also representation of organizations, programs and projects in spheres of non-formal education, experience exchange and stimulation of cooperation between them. I think that we managed to reach them partially. Mostly we managed to go deep into process of understanding of non-formal education as a part of national and all-European educational space.

Master-classes and presentations allowed seeing originality and a variety of educational organizations and results of their work. It certainly appears a good basis and the reason for experience exchange and cooperation.

It is very important that our festival was international. Our colleagues from other European countries had an opportunity to get acquainted with lots of organizations and their activity for short period of time, and also with those prob-

* "Фестфываль нефармальнай адукацыі проста абавязаны стаць традыцыйнай падзеяй". Ітэрв'ю з Уладам Вялічка і Астрыд Зам // Адукатар №3(9), 2006. – С. 2–4.

lems which do not allow sleeping well Belarusian educators. Our foreign partners have noticed that some of these problems appear specific and new to them, but the majority is in the same degree actual for educational sector of their countries. Very positive statements and echoes from foreign visitors of the Festival show that we managed to present Belarusian non-formal education as an alive, exciting and active field of activity that allows counting on development of new international contacts and cooperation.

Astrid

Considering that the Festival had several different purposes, it would be simply not realistic to reach all of them during one Festival. However, it seems to me, that the overall objective is reached: for the first time all the cumulative experience in the sphere of Belarusian non-formal education has been presented within one large event. In my opinion, understanding of value of non-formal education in a modern society worked well. It became clearer for everybody that non-formal education is actually a basic form of life-long self-learning. But, unfortunately, considering absence of corresponding legislative conditions in Belarus, it was possible to define prospects of development of non-formal education in Belarus only in the limited degree. Therefore we hope that after the Festival there will be more intensively dialogue in the sphere of the legislation — especially as the law on adult education is on the agenda.

Were there any difficulties in preparation and carrying the event out? How the organizing committee has overcame it?

Vlad

There were enough difficulties; there will be no place on pages of the magazine to tell about all of them. I consider the basic problem at the organization of the Festival an adverse position of Ministry of Education, unwillingness to help and to cooperate with non-state organizations. Such a position considerably limits opportunities of interaction, mutual experience enrichment, realization of joint plans. The sector of non-formal education will being developing in any case, irrespective of a help or barriers from a side of the state, but I wish to see in representatives of state bodies real steps for searching mutual understanding, a recognition of value of our work, real desire to use experience of our work in flavor of Belarusian citizens.

Astrid

As I took part only in definition of the general lines of the Festival and did not see all the daily work, it is difficult for me to estimate problems in preparation of the Festival. But the organizing committee has overcome them — it is ex fact.

Which forms within the Festival were more successful, and which — less?

Vlad

In my opinion, the most successful forms at Festival were an exhibition of educational organizations and products of their activity, and also presentation of printed editions. As I can judge, these parts of our festival were the most visited and intensive. At the same time master-classes were very important, even the key elements of the Festival which provided an originality and active involvement of the participants.



In particular I wish to note realization of the idea of competition which has become a "raisin" of our holiday. Because of time limits for preparation of competition, we could offer only three nominations, but it seems this idea was to educators' liking. The competition is not only and not really much of competition, but an attempt to set the certain quality standard in our spheres of work, mark out patterns for other educators to follow. I would like this competition to become traditional, to be spent thoroughly enough and not to be limited by frameworks of the Festival, enabling each expert and the organization of the sphere of non-formal education to present on the competition their product — a book, an Internet-resource, etc. There is also element of PR for the whole sector of the educational organizations and their activity for a wide audience of Belarusian citizens.

Astrid

The most important is that it was a very good "mix" of different forms of actions: plenary sessions, round tables, presentations, master-classes, circles and other cultural elements. Therefore participants didn't get tired within 3 days of work. Especially as they had a choice of intensive active participation or — as "butterfly" in "open space" — to fly from one action to another to receive general notion. Also it was good, that participants could estimate work of the presented organizations and projects and to give a feedback this way.

What wasn't successful?

Vlad

It's a pity we did not see representatives of our neighbor countries as participants of the Festival. Our colleagues from Germany, Sweden and Denmark have arrived to take part in the Festival, also there were by one representative from the Ukraine and Russia. We counted on more active participation of colleagues from non-formal education from the Baltic countries, Poland, the Ukraine, but this time this idea was not realized. I think, in the future we'll pay more attention to this aspect.

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Secondly, we didn't manage to interest in participation in the Festival in a high degree a wide range of representatives of non-formal education who have no direct link to civic education. As a result our colleagues from business-education and the state educational institutions were almost not present on our festival. At the same time we understand those lacks which were present during the organization of the Festival and have already started to think how to come into more dense working contacts with colleagues from adjacent educational spheres.

Astrid

I consider that round tables were less successful. It partially can be explained by the fact that it was the most complex form during the festival, considering a different degree of readiness of participants. Hence, round tables had informational function, but couldn't reach any concrete results or arrangements. Sometimes they turned out to be discussions of "knowing minority", and the other participants simply played a role of spectators. It, certainly, is not desirable.

What were not planned positive results?

Vlad

For me an unexpected positive result was discussion and acceptance of the general resolution of the Festival by its participants. Generally resolutions are not of a festival genre, making such documents is more typical for conferences, forums and other more official actions. We had the Festival, moreover. The Festival of non-formal education. The idea of acceptance of the joint statement was born in organizing committee only two days before the Festival started, but it was me who had to develop and put it into practice. I consider it a correct step, without it the cost of our action would be cheaper. The fact of occurrence of the resolution shows that there is such a phenomenon as non-formal education, there are working organizations and institutions, there are experts and authorities, and also there are comprehended joint interests (to be exact, the interests which are being thought over now), requirements to the state and offers to a society.

Astrid

The most pleasant unexpectedness for me personally was that I have received new ideas for carrying out of actions in our International educational center. In other words, I have received the certain informal education during the Festival.

As for the coordinator of the Program of support of Belarus by the Federal government of Germany, for me the most important was that the majority of the educational projects carrying out within the limits of the program used the Festival for presentation of results of their projects. Though it's already planned result, it's pleasant to be realized.

Will the Festival of non-formal education become a traditional event?

Vlad

Positive enough experience of the organization and leading the first Festival of non-formal education encourages us to make this event traditional. The majority of our colleagues also incline to such a decision. There are different versions on regularity we need to organize such a Festival. Now the majority of the friends of the organizing committee of the first Festival consider that the right frequency of making such an action is every two years. Thus, we will think over opportunities to organize the second Belarusian Festival of non-formal education in autumn of 2008.

Astrid

In my opinion, the Festival had a very great value for formation of feeling of unity of everyone who is involved in sphere of non-formal education in Belarus. Without such a common platform successful development of this sector seems to me practically impossible. Therefore the Festival of non-formal education is simply obliged to become a traditional event.

Translated by Alena Lugovtsova

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All photos: A.Lugovtsova, Vlad Velichko.

Resolution
of Non-Formal Education Festival
(15-17 September 2006, Minsk)

We the participants of Non-Formal Education Festival declare that non-formal education for youth and adults is one of the most important resources that are necessary for development of both personality and society and is a key factor of raising human potential and integration of the Republic of Belarus into European educational space.

In A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning of The European Commission (2000) it is underlined that **non-formal education is equitable part of lifelong educational process.** Starting from the second half of the twentieth century there is an active search for the ways of renewing systems of education which provide transferring from the principle "education for the whole life" to the principle "education through the whole life". Actual aim of educational policy nowadays is providing conditions that let people learn through the whole life, get modern general and professional knowledge and in that way realize individual educational strategy and provide solving actual problems of actual society.

Thereupon we consider that non-formal education as integral component of national system of education can and should become the core of sustainable development and humanization of social life.

At the same time we have to state that potential opportunities of non-formal education are not completely realized and used during planning and implementing social-political and economic reforms in the Republic of Belarus. Underestimation of their roles as well as insufficiently developed legislation has lead to the situation when non-formal education in Belarus hasn't taken adequate place in the life of society.

We are sure that

- Non-formal education is comparatively autonomous social-cultural phenomenon, have its own direction of development that is tightly connected with all social institutes and provides significant influence to other spheres (economy, politics, science, legislation, ideology, morality etc.);
- Non-formal education can become an ideal arena for approbation of new approaches and technologies during reorganizing national education space.

Being aware that cultural and educational potential of citizens today determines temps, forms, specifics and results of social evolution;

Basing on the statement that National Strategy of Sustainable Social-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus till year 2020 defines the task of democratization of education with the aim to develop creative features of personality as well as its abilities to act and decide independently, to perfect professional competencies;

Taking into consideration that Council of Governments' leaders of CIS countries on May 25th 2006 approved the Conception of Development of Adult Education in CIS states;

We suggest

A) To organizations of all types of property that work in the field of non-formal education of adults and youth — to make the following practical actions:

- Organizing a process of discussing, concordance and working out common approaches to development of adult and youth education in Belarus.
- Creating special Working Group for coordination of activity of organizations of non-formal and adult education and building dialogue with all interested sides.

B) To legislative and executive institutions of Belarus — to fulfill in practice following steps:

- Starting the process of establishing public-state organ that should provide taking into account interests of all organizations working in adult education with next creating cross-sector Public Committee on national education at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus with participation of various interested public associations, business and state structures.
- Initiating development of necessary program and legislative documents in the field of adult and youth education with obligatory participation of and consultations with representatives of interested public associations and educational institutions.
- Starting public debates on developing program and regulatory documents, concerning adult and youth education.
- Holding in year 2007 international conference of CIS countries on adult education.

As the main principles to base program and regulatory document on, **we state**

- Right of everybody on lifelong formal and non-formal education at any age.
- Adopting as a general principle of national education system development the pluralism of concepts, founders and forms of educational activities.
- Accepting public value of adult education and non-formal education and strengthening the guaranties of its development through providing budget financing, financial support to participation in non-formal and adult education of various social groups, tax privileges for non-formal education institutions etc.
- Providing state support to the scientific research of adult and non-formal education, supporting developing of personnel training for this education sphere.

We the participants of the Festival are sure that non-formal adult education in combination with other elements of national system of education can and should make great input into providing educational and cultural development of citizens, sovereignty and dignity of nation, human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Belarus and also provide transition to sustainable development.

Research of Awareness and Preferences Consumers of Non-formal Education Services*

Natalia Riabova

Natalia Riabova — master of business administration,
manager of education programs of the public association "Ecodom".

A pilot marketing research made by the author in February-October this year shaped a basis for this article. The research had the following aims: to identify consumers' awareness and preferences in respect of non-formal education. The term "non-formal education" was broadly interpreted, it covered any kind of short-term or medium-term education program of non-commercial and commercial organizations. It was purposely done to clarify what position third sector education programs take in "common people" mind; whether a consumer distinguishes between civic education and other kinds of non-formal education; what a consumer prefers — commercial or non-commercial training courses and programs. The results of the first part of the research (Minsk inhabitants were questioned) were presented at the Festival of Non-Formal Education at the round table talks "Research Development in the Field of Non-Formal Education". Discussion and work in groups at the round table let to set goals and objectives for the second part of research, focused on education programs of public organizations. It was a qualitative research carried out by focus-group method. The article is composed of two parts, first of which describes the main results of quantities survey research, the second — results of focus-group.

Part 1. Quantitative research

Before we come to describing the questionnaires' results I briefly explain why the research turned to be as it is. The main difficulty was in shaping the offer and goals of the research. The initial goal which was set by the researchers was identification of needs in education and preferences in the field of civic education to promote it widely in Belarus. By first discussions of goals and methods of the research it became clear that questions and target groups of concern of different organizations differ significantly. Besides that, the organizations differently interpreted the term "civic education" and possible strategy of its development in Belarus. Thus, the initial goal "research on civic education" was transformed into research "on non-formal education". There was no agent which either made an order for civic education or defined research goals in the field of civic education. There were separate organizations — representatives of the third sector each of which had own target group and its attitude to education program.

Thus a compromise was achieved: to carry out a pilot, "investigating" research of consumers' opinions, which could be useful and interesting for the majority of organizations engaged in the field of non-formal education.

Key questions of this research:

- Our consumer — who is he/she?
- What does he/she want to learn?
- What does he/she need it for?
- What organizations and events does he/she choose?
- How does he/she get information on our events?
- Is he/she ready to pay for education service?

Before asking questions, the third sector organizations should clarify the following:

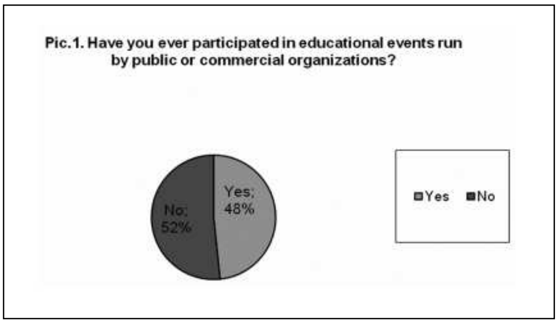
- Are there many of them — people interested in studying?
- Are people aware of services of non-formal education?
- What is the position of educational events of the third sector among other educational services?

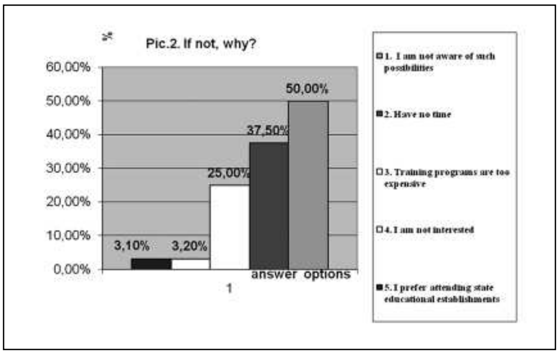
The research was carried out by questioning. Respondents were accidentally chosen, a number of respondents — 124 people at the age of 20 through 56; 59 men, 65 women; Minsk inhabitants.

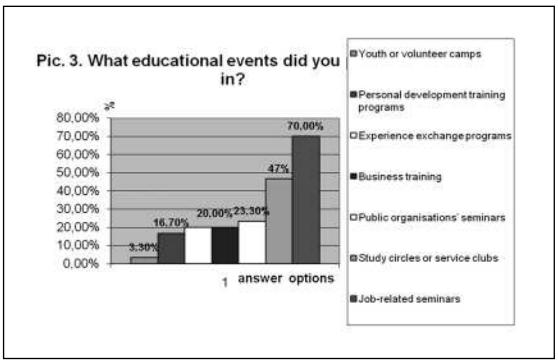
* Рябова Н. Исследование осведомленности и предпочтений потребителей услуг неформального образования // Адукатор №3(9), 2006. — С. 30–35.

Results and mail conclusions:

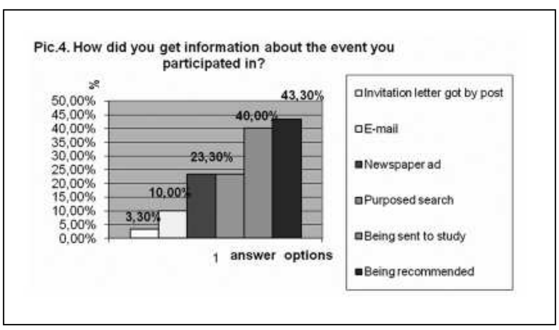
1. Awareness about non-formal education services is low even in the capital. More than half of survey respondents answered that they had never participated in education events of commercial or non-commercial organizations (pic.1). Answering a question "Why didn't you participate?" they chose an option "I do not know about these opportunities". (pic.2).







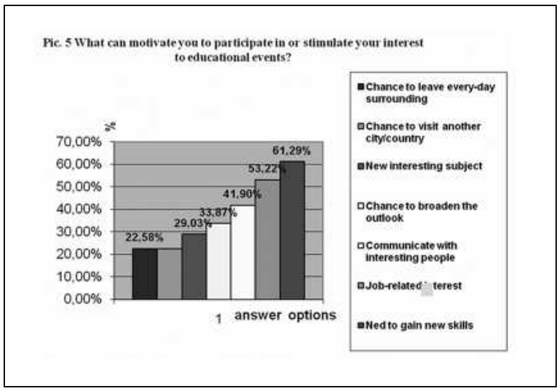
2. The most widespread information channel about educational events is recommendations, except advanced training (pic.4).

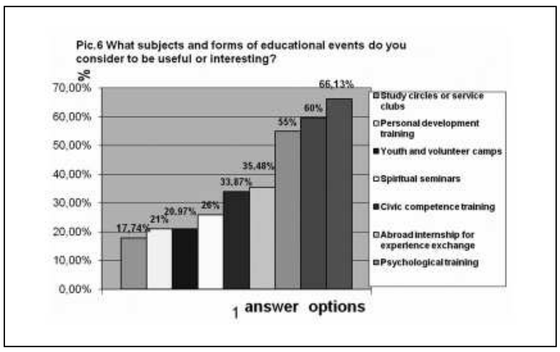


3. Job-related and advanced training programs are the most attended and interesting education services for the consumers (pic.3, pic.6).

4. The main motive for participating in educational events the respondents consider to be a need to gain new skills and professional interest (pic.6).

5. Despite the fact that the consumers show clear functional attitude towards educational events treating them as means for advancing qualification and own competitiveness on the labor market quite high percent of respondents show the interest to civic education (pic.6).



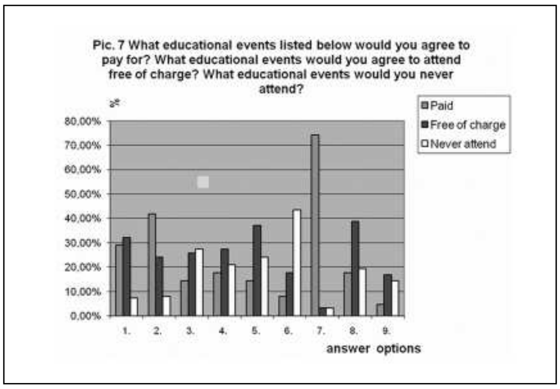


6. Cognitive interest and communication possibilities can be a motive to participate in events of non-formal education (relevant both for the respondents who are not experienced in such events and for those who participated) (pic.5).

7. The majority of the consumers are ready to pay for courses providing exact skills and training courses raising professional qualities and chances to succeed on the labor market. Less that 10% of respondents relied that they are ready to attend paid training courses raising civic competences (pic.7).

8. Study circles are still "unusual" form for Belarusian consumers provoking rejection in a group of population (pic.7), nevertheless some consumers are ready to pay for this service.

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A list of educational events (was followed by exact samples and explanations):

1. — Psychological seminars
2. — Training courses raising professional qualities and chances on the labor market
3. — Spiritual seminars
4. — Personal development training courses
5. — Study circles and service clubs
6. — Training courses raising civic competences
7. — Courses for training new skills
8. — Abroad internship for experience exchange
9. — Youth or volunteer camps

9. The following questions are required more detailed study:

- What are the preferences of different target groups: youth, women, elderly people, rural population?
- How to attract consumers' attention to information on non-formal education services?
- How to develop tools for informing and promoting civic education services relevant to current situation in Belarus?
- How to use resources of the program participants for the purpose to extend the awareness about the services?
- What new themes and forms of events can attract new participants?

10. As it was the pilot research and sampling was limited it is recommended to make statistically-reliable investigations of the consumers' opinions in the field of non-formal education service including regions and small towns. The obtained data can be used for specifying questions and shaping hypotheses for qualitative research (interview and focus-groups).

Part 2. Qualitative research

The second part of the research was carried out by a focus-group technique and was aimed at deep study of two questions: 1) youth's attitude to non-formal educational events, in particular to the events conducted by the public organizations; 2) attitude of the youth and employed people of the middle age to such educational form as study circles. The study circles as a subject for the qualitative research was chosen because the development of this new-for-Belarus form of adult education is one of the priorities of a network of organizations of non-formal education (ACE).

4 focus-groups were conducted: 1) youth, 3 to 5 year university students; 2) youth, college students; 3) middle-aged people, pedagogues (subject — study circles); 4) employed people of the middle age, with different jobs (subject — study circles). The participants of the "youth" focus-groups were asked to fill-in a questionnaire which already used in the first part of the research, later on they discussed. The participants of the focus-groups on study circles were given promotion materials (booklets, multimedia presentations); later on there was a discussion in a group.

Unfortunately a magazine article format does not let to present the results of all focus-groups. In this respect we present the results on the quantative research on the subject "The Youth and Non-Formal Education".

The results of the analysis of the views given by the respondents of the "youth" focus-groups on main questions under discussion are as follows.

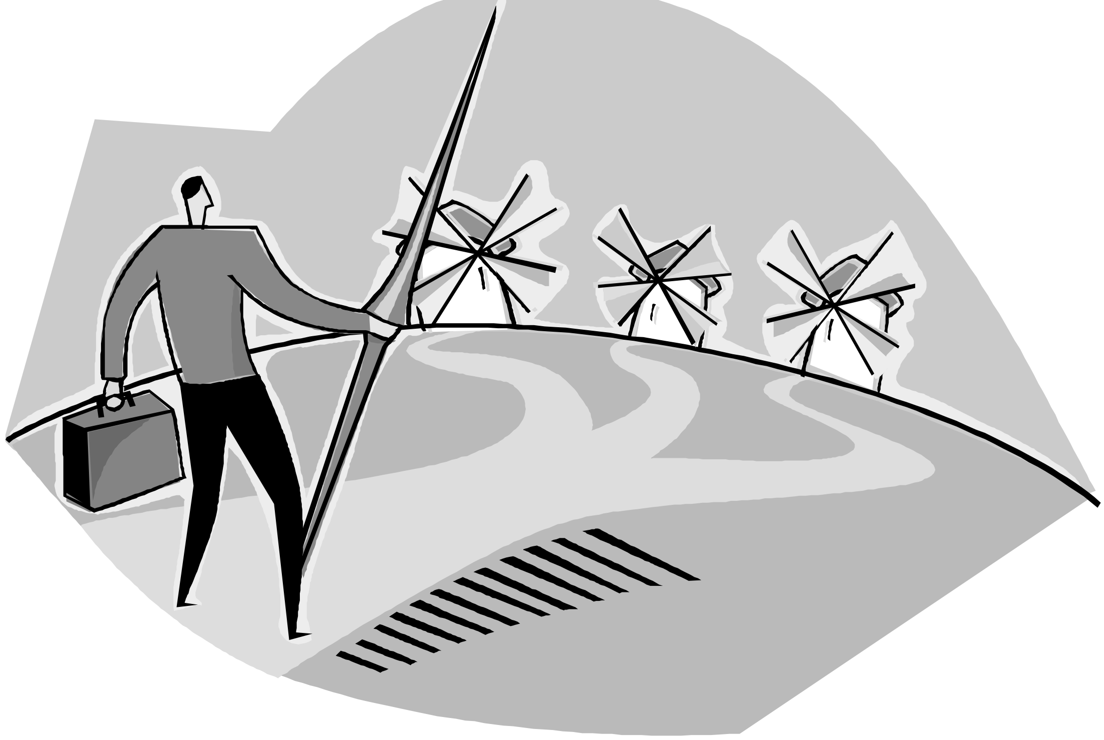
Awareness about non-formal education services and attitude towards them

It was found out that a great part of the respondents are not aware of possibilities given by the non-formal education services. According to their responds they have never taken interest in such events and paid any attention to information about the courses and training programs. The respondents among students of the educational establishments specified that the only reason for focused search for information on non-formal education services can be a need to get exact information and skills (foreign language was set as a sample).

Some respondents impressed by a wide range of services stated in the questionnaire although the majority said they had been aware about such offer on the education service market or assumed that subjects and forms of education services are varied. Some respondents noticed that they are surprised with study on the subject " civic competences" including the consumers' rights.

Experience gained by participating in educational events of commercial and non-commercial organizations

Only three respondents had participation experience in educational events of public organizations; the rest had no experience in participating in seminars and training programs in general; some respondents attended foreign language courses. It is typical that respondents being experienced in educational events of public organizations showed great interest and positive attitude to non-formal education in general and they got interest in a much wider subject spectrum. Due to the experienced students exactly that experience made an influence on their further commitment and stimulated a strong interest to non-formal education. They are ready to recommend non-formal educational events to their contacts. Their commitment and participation is restricted by lack of time due to study at the educational establishments.



Respondents never participated were asked whether they could imagine themselves to be a person actively attending educational events and giving recommendations to their contacts, they gave the following answers:

- **"I cannot imagine myself being such a person, I am interested in another activities."**
- **"I cannot still imagine that I am interested with such things and spend my spare time on it, but I think it is quite possible. Never knows how the life interests will change and what I will do in future."**
- **"Probably it is interesting indeed, judging on variety of subjects indicated in the questionnaire."**

The reasons for lack of participation experience in non-formal educational events

The majority of participants stated deep involvement in study at university, life problems and lack of time as a reason for having no interest to participate. One respondent viewed an idea that "lack of time" is a typical excuse in all life situations and the main reason is a lack of interest or participation experience.

Preferable ways to get information about non-formal education services

All respondents prefer getting recommendations on educational events for their contacts. Some respondents consider commercial to be an acceptable way. They think that commercial for educational events should be "attractive" and persistent. All respondents without any exception showed a negative attitude to information and advertising e-mailing.

Educational event subject range

The majority of interviewed university students consider job-related educational events to be the most interesting and important. The majority of respondents named the subject "Career Planning" as the most attractive.

The prevailed part of participants of the focus-group showed an interest to the subject "Consumers' Rights".

Some respondents showed an interest to "unusual" subjects (as a sample they mentioned archeological digs), some – to personal development training courses, spiritual development.

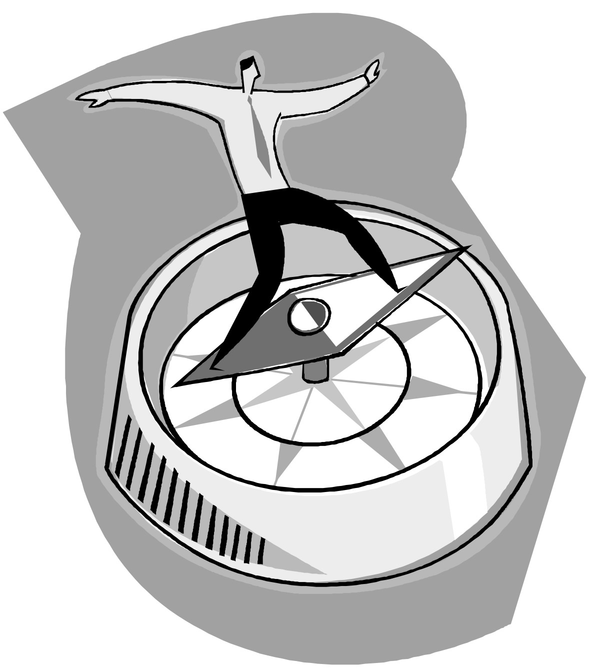
Respondents without participation experience almost did not show any interest to volunteer camps and international exchanges. Experienced participants took an interest to a wider spectrum of subjects in comparison with other participants of focus-groups.

Motivation to participate in educational events

The following factors were listed, they are supposed to influence the motivation to participate in educational events: a need to get knowledge and skills, job interests, meeting interesting people. The majority of respondents also specified subject attractiveness as a motive.

As a sample I can quote the following: **"I think that the most important thing is subject attractiveness. Of course, some courses can be necessary for advanced training. But I am happy with the education I have at university, thus it would be much more important to attend something interesting".**

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Attitude towards civic education and public organizations

The majority of the respondents, according to their words, while filling-in the questionnaire did not pay any attention to information on public organizations training programs, raising civic competences (consumers' rights, democracy, leadership, ecology, etc.). Answering to clarification questions they specified first of all their interest to professional growth and advanced training, personal development (college students). Nevertheless some respondents showed an interest to this subject. The following statements are sampled:

- "It was interesting for me personally. I paid attention."
- "I think that consumers' rights is very important subject. It is complicated and takes much time to search for information on this matter and it turned to be very interesting and useful to attend the seminar."
- "The matter is that I have already participated in such events, thus it generated my interest. I consider these events to be interesting and useful, thus if there is a chance to participate I will use it."

Respondents' awareness about "third sector" and its activities is rather low, although all respondents are aware of a significant number of public organizations, which goals and activities are variable. The respondents specified that activity of these organizations is developing "aside", "in shadow", there is not much information about them and there is no time and wish to search for it purposely. The Belarusian Republican Youth Union is widely known but it has a negative image because of "total participation", too formal, and as respondents said — "uselessness".

As a sample of respondents' attitude to public organizations I quote the respondents' answers to the following question of the moderator:

Questions: As far I understand nobody of you participates in public organization. Why do you think people participate in their activity?

Answers:

- They are fanatics.
- No, I disagree. I think that different people have different lives and never know what will be interesting.
- I think that these people are doing what is interesting for them.
- If I do not do anything like that now, it is because I spend my entire time on working and studying. When I have some spare time I just want to spend it on myself, relaxing. But if I have had means of living enough and spare time, if I have had any need to study all the time and think about earnings, I would be interested to do something like this.

Attitude to informal status of educational events (no state specimen certificates)

Informal status of educational events according to the respondents' answers is not a reason not to use this service. In contrary respondents think that quality of education services provided by both commercial and non-commercial organizations probably higher, the subjects are more important and diversified. Besides that, even people without participation experience specified that non-formal education can be characterized by innovative methods.

There is a quotation of such kind (a respondent is inexperienced in participating in non-formal education): "I think that there are such training programs which are simply not conducted at the state educational establishments (for example, speaking to the press or dealing with officials or the consumers' rights). This training will not be provided at the university. And such training courses are interesting to be attended as they make alternative to the state education, and there are other subjects which are considered to be out of priority of the state universities. Besides that, the organizations providing non-formal education services have drafted techniques for these training courses. This is also very interesting as the university provides lectures and take examinations — that's all."

Attitude to paid/free of charge non-formal education services

A significant part of respondents viewed an opinion that the majority of non-formal education services should be free of charge. According to what the respondents answered they are ready to pay for educational events relevant to advanced training, professional growth, and gaining new skills. Those who were experienced in participating in international camps said that they were ready to participate and pay for it as the experienced gained was very interesting and useful. Other respondents viewed an opinion that they probably would agree to pay such events partially.

The following statement is typical: "I know that some training courses can be expensive but I would agree to attend them on free-of-charge basis, because I am curious."

Attitude to duration and form of educational events

The majority of the interviewed students viewed an opinion that it is more comfortable for them to attend training course 2-3 times a week in the evening (2–3 hours) then find time for two– or three-day course. This was also marked by the students attended the two– or three-day training course. Some respondents also marked that they would prefer a systematize course than a set of training courses on different unrelated subjects.

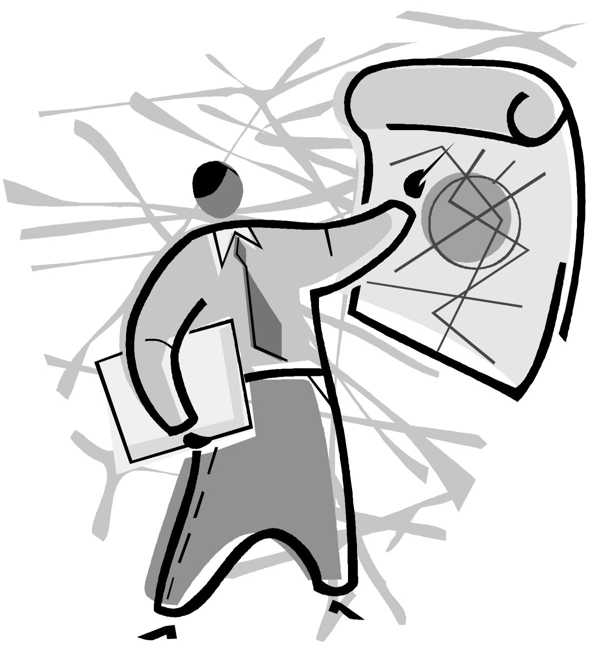
Attitude to study circles and service clubs

The majority of participants of two focus-groups consider study circles to be an acceptable form for common implementation of the youth interests. Some of the participants are experienced in participating in such circles (bands and amateur photographer studio). Respondents specified that advantage of this form of education is self-sufficiency of participants and wide opportunities in choosing subject, duration and periodicity. It was viewed that the name "service club" better corresponds to the sense of these common meetings then "study circle".

Conclusions

The most important conclusions and recommendations which can be made on results of the research carried out are the following:

1. Events of non-formal and particularly of civic education need more intensive promotion.



2. It is needed to use more resource of participants of educational events of the "third sector" for promoting civic education.
3. Organizations of the non-commercial sector can use more active a niche of "advanced training", skill training.
4. While making quantitative and qualitative researches it was identified that educational events raising civic competences attract interest of a number of respondents. Apparently a consumer is slightly aware of these educational services, thus public organizations should offer a wider spectrum of subjects characterized by availability and attractiveness and are practice-oriented to attract attention to civic education.
5. As cognitive interest (interesting and useful subject, possibility to broaden outlook) is an important motive for participation in educational events. Thus, it is necessary to make advertising and information massages focusing on attractiveness and new character of the event's subject. During the qualitative research it was identified that many respondents think that bright and attractive advertising can trigger their interest to educational event (if the subject is interesting).
6. By the qualitative research it was identified that participation experience in non-formal education raises interest to these events and awareness in this field. It was also identified that studying youth without experience in seminars and training courses prefer evening classes of 2–3 hours each, 2–3 times a week to two –or three-day training courses. These data can become a fundament to recommend non-formal education organizations to make experiments with forms of educational events. Next recommendation is to use wider short-term presentations and workshops to involve possible participants of long-term educational programs.
7. By the qualitative research it was identified that the subjects "Career Planning" and "Vocational Guidance " attract young people. Accordingly, these subjects can be recommended to commercial and non-commercial organizations to work with young people.
8. By the qualitative research it was identified that interviewed students consider study circles and service clubs to be acceptable form of common implementation of youth interest that can be a basis for recommending active use of this educational form for this target group.
9. By the qualitative research it was identified that respondents without participation experience in non-formal education are not ready to pay for these educational services. The results of the quantitative research testifies that the consumers are ready to pay for the subjects related to employment, advanced training and gaining need skills. Accordingly, individual approach to developing strategy on promoting paid services in the field of non-formal education basing on specifics of exact target groups can be recommended to organizations.

More precise information on this research is available on www.adukatar.net.

Translated by Victoria Dronova

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A Very Subjective Mode of Coach's Professional Development*

Elena Karpievich,
Tatyana Krasnova



Where can an ordinary Belarusian coach get assistance in developing professional competence from nowadays? What prevails in the process of professional growth of typical Belarusian coach of non-formal education nowadays: learning from the mistakes spotted, self-training, "learning on the step of a bus" — while going from one place to another with your colleague, taking part in trainings, or maybe supervision, individual consulting[1]? It may be interesting to hold research into these questions and obtain an objective image. The authors of this article made an attempt to conduct a sort of pilot poll where they themselves appear as interviewees. The results received are certainly subjective and full of emotional flashes this time initiated by the Festival of Non-Formal Education (15–17 September, 2006) can be regarded as the ground for the next reflection in turn on forms of support, not periodical but rather constant, for professional (as well as individual, without putting on a modest air) development of trainers. Maybe the moment when NGO will create their own supervision institution (or we shall call it otherwise) and examination of training programs for coaches will come? Maybe we are already late and there's no necessity in such practice as fewer and fewer seminar have been taking place lately… **Elena Karpievich** and **Tatyana Krasnova** are speculating on that (and not only) topic.

The first question that we would like to ask is connected with the announced in our practice demand of a participant for education which is being received. One of the myths belief which unites us is that education is efficient if a participant has first and foremost got a motive and a formulated demand. If you are to face this thesis it will be logical to ask the following question: can you clearly formulate your demand for personal professional trainee's competence development?

— I consider this question too straightforward.

— I agree that the question is rather harsh, but to my mind it's justified in case of short term duration, the rhythm within the boundaries of which a Belarusian coach has to work nowadays.

— By the way, this is the form the question sounds when the participants are interviewed: what are the prospective results of your taking part in the training? What would you like to learn from it? To answer the questions it's easier to stick to a ready-made sentence, for example, (what is being assumed by the training?) and "to try it on".

— Trying to give a sincere answer to the question, personally I faced the difficulty of formulating a concrete demand for assistance, on the one hand, and questions to myself that will let me revise my professional activity, on the other. In that case it would be useful to find a coach[2] who would help to formulate the demand. Unfortunately, Belarusian Trainers' Association doesn't posses such intuition.

— All these "beating about the bush" do not cancel the direct answer to the direct question. Without thinking for too long, I'll mention the thing that comes first to my mind. I'd like to master the case-study method to its full extent. By the way, this method could be used to a wider extent not only in my work with different target groups, but while holding trainings for NGO coaches as well. I'd also like to learn how to make multimedia presentations of such a quality so that they shouldn't just be a nice wrapping of some material of big volume with even greater pleasure. Quite often multimedia presentations represent a very convert way of conventional transmission of information. The embodiment of this is when an attempt to stock the slide with as much information as possible is being realized. In its nature it's not any difference from an academic lecture that is often opposed to training or a seminar.

— I'd go on enumerating and add to the list: generally speaking, there's a lack of skills (computer-aided skills);

* Карпиевич Е., Краснова Т. Очень субъективный образ развития профессионализма тренера // Адукатар №4 (10), 2006. С. — 12–19.

1 The discussion of the issue concerning the creation of trainer consulting practice has been held in our society for quite a long time and within the course of different educational events. In particular, such an idea was stated by L.Kirilyuk at the conference devoted to the results of the Project "School of Coaches" run by the partner organizations of Belarus and Sweden.

2 Coaching — professional help rendered to a person in setting personal and professional aims and means of their fulfillment, in acquiring the skills he / she needs to improve individual efficiency, in overcoming difficult intrinsic situations, in preserving calmness and acting efficiently in difficult time.

delicacy towards the situation unwinding in the group at the moment; abilities to "watch and see" the situation in the group with your eyes wide open; skills to work with your own confidence; abilities to notice and learn from your mistakes, and barely a detached view is required.

"We begin to find our limits only when we start to work and develop. There are some boundar–ies that are surmountable. For example, you can be quite reserved. Knowing that you have to pay much attention to communication in a group you can develop your attentiveness to another person and as result improve your communication skills. But there are some insurmountable limits. Realizing them can be painful. At the same time one should take it as it is. One shouldn't get stuck on something unattainable…

A trainer certainly has to develop as a person. Why? What for? If the purpose is in under–standing oneself in all the variety of manifesta–tion and in connection with that understanding other people and life in general, then this ways lead one to improvement of one's cooperation with the group members. If the aim is to reach an ideal state, and make a role–model out of oneself, then it's the route to a sect not training. It restricts the coach as well as the group mem–bers in their development and perception of life in all its diversity" [1].

What do you think? Do our demands seem typical to other trainers or maybe we are absorbed in our extremely selfish illusions? What if a typical list of demands is possible, it may be a sign testifying some drawbacks in the system of coaches' training and some new trends and demands from the side of consumers of our educational services (though the system does not exist in NGO by all accounts).

— Judging by a small poll among our fellow workers we managed to find out what they consider to be topical nowadays: to diagnose hot buttons that are often faced with during the work with specific target groups by reflecting on their activities; to determine the level of one's own trainer's competence and prospects of its development; to work out methods of search, prepara-tion of handouts for the participants, to systematize the types and functions of these handouts; to acquire the skill of working with different points of view presented at the seminar including the discussion of them, thus turning it into a rich in content one, etc.

"In reality not 100% of participants come to the seminar to learn something or to accomplish some certain tasks. Here are some extracts from the participants' statements:

- generally speaking I'd like to know what a training is;
- I haven't studied for a long time, I'd like to get to know something new (anything at all), I'm tired of going round the circle;
- I was actually sent here by my company, why not to go…;
- I've heard a lot about the coach (company, theme), it's interesting to see everything with your own eyes;
- I need to adorn my resume, and here they confer a good certificate, the company is reliable;
- I'd like to come off the press… to make a beneficial acquaintance…

They say as a man sows so shall he reap. Where are You heading to?" [2].

To conclude with our brief exchange of opinions let's guess that a coach may find it useful asking himself / herself some amount of questions that help him / her to analyze his / her own activity as a mean of professional deforma-tion precautions.

E.g.

- What are you good at doing at the training (semi-nar)? Why do you make such a conclusion (give several examples)?
- What skills, competence[3] do you lack of?
- Do you feel confident in the group? What is this confi-dence based on?
- What makes you feel anxious before the seminar? How do you manage to compensate this anxiety?
- How do you know the seminar or the training that was held was successful or failed? What are the signs of it? Etc.

The list of questions can be further specified as well as differentiated in accordance with the degree of profes-sional experience of a trainer.

Besides one can make an attempt to draft a table[4] that will format some mind map of the trainer's demand for

[3] It's extremely productive for self-analysis to use the list of trainer skills described in a wonderful book by L.M.Korol, E.L. Mihailova "Training for trainers: how the steel was tempered". — Moscow: Independent Company" "Class", 2004. — 192 p.

[4] Compiling of the chart was done on the basis of ideas taken from the texts: Astafyeva L. Navigator for those who want to study or what criteria are used to evaluate a business seminar. Consulting and trainings in St. Petersburg **http://www.treko.ru/show_article 379**; Korol L.M., Mihailova E.L. Training for trainers: how the steel was tempered. — Moscow.: Independent Company "Class", 2004. — 192 p. — (Library of psychology and psychotherapy. Psychology and business, edition 100).

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education, it would be compiled on the grounds of the formal and logical bases and would lay claim to getting the role of a "universal means" that allows us to trace the demands of the participants as well (below you will find a possible variant of such a chart). It's very easy to use it: one just has to ask himself / herself a question "What do I need for an effective trainer activity?", and then one moves cell by cell (e.g. there's lack of equipment units, namely new information on the theme…).

Table 1. A "Mind map" to assist a coach in formulating the demand for education

Equipment	Information	Novelty of the information Demand for the information Practical character of the information The method one can use to work with the information The method of information presentation, etc.
	Toolkit	Novelty of the modes, methods, ways The potential of the educational power of the methods (an opportunity to initiate some changes in the mode of thinking) The technological character of the methods (an opportunity of their use in professional activities) Proportionality of methods and content Conformity of methods with the group dynamics, etc.
Models (precedents) for imitation (reproduction, repetition)	Trainer	Individual style of running a training Individual "myths" of an effective training Sensitivity towards the "situations" An exclusive character of an individual mode of training Direction of a seminar course of running
Integrity of practice	Feedback	Reflection on the targets of one's own professional activity Non-conformation to the stereotypes and aims Work with personal anxiety or confidence, etc.
Training ground	Experimenting	Experimenting with new methods, questions, ideas, etc. outside the training space Enlarging the role repertoire of a trainer, etc.

Supposing a trainer manage to formulate the demand or state the intention to search opportunities to reform the quality of his / her activities, then the next question arises: do you have anyone to discuss or reflect on your practice (answer your own questions)?

– Unfortunately, I reckon that I personally practically don't have any opportunities to discuss my training and teaching practice. I allow myself to verbalize this thought publicly just because there some feeling that the situation I'm in is typical of the coach environment.

– I think that the most important thing is to believe that reflection is the mean that can improve one's work that it helps to study its productively. Although teachers and psychologists substantiated this function of reflection long ago, the question is maybe in coming to believe in its strength. It may seem strange but reflection isn't so spread in our work. One has to take the real truth into consideration: e.g. right after the seminar there's neither force nor time for reflection as a rule. Some time later the edge is lost. This is a complicated type of activity that requires much time and mediated participation of some other specialists. That is why it's timely to put the question about coaching for a trainer.

– The second issue that is not less important: often discussing our own seminar we do not reflect on it but simply exchange our ardent opinions about what we managed to do and what we didn't. One can hardly call such an exchange of opinions a reflective practice. Observations show that coaches first and foremost discuss the activity of the participants most often – what they were doing and what they were not doing, whether they were of an advanced level, capable of studying something, open-minded and not aggressive. Discussion also centers on how effective was this or that method, how it can be improved, to what degree the content of the lesson was learnt. Though one should reformulate the question: "what was I doing as a trainer?" and "what effect did this activity produce upon the participants?". Maybe the acquired skills of reflection on the activities will lead to the ability of reflection in the course of an activity… This is namely one of the distinguishing features of a professional.

Summing up all the above mentioned we may conclude: there's still a certain priority of "doing" rather analyzing among coaches. In accordance with these priorities our professional time is charted. Although we will hardly ever afford any other correlation, we think it's important to make these two processes parallel.

Reflection may be lagging behind the time as the trainer's practice hasn't reached its "climax of identity" yet or the trainers haven't merely taken care of organizing a developing educational space for themselves. Though the forms that organize the reflective space which help a coach to analyze his / her activity are as a matter of fact known. These are "trainings for trainers", a club, a circle [3], coaching that has already been mentioned not once in the article, supervision, etc. But the question is whether these forms can function effectively on the territory of Belarus? What should we do to make them work?

Perhaps it will do NGO coaches good if they periodically have a look at the nitty-gritty of business-trainers' education to widen their horizons. Take for example wishes that are expressed by business-trainers and consultants and forwarded to the management of the companies in connection with the improvement of their qualification, they are worth paying attention to [4]. If we are to make projections of the situation as to the sphere of informal education then we have to establish the fact that its trainers unfortunately have an opportunity to lay claim to themselves or to each other and these wishes can be reinterpreted as possible forms of self-development.

Thus business-trainers are expecting the attendance of conferences, seminars, trainings to be organized for them. Perhaps this trend of qualification is the most popular one in our practice: being guided by various internet links we get information and react on the topic / name / trainer / name of the organization that is going to hold the training.

The theme of carrying out a regular supervision at all stages of work is popular. Business-trainers and consultants place their hopes in organization of internal educational seminars, methodical in particular. There has of course been mutual education as a form of advanced vocational training activity of a number of NGO organizations. It was particularly popular at the beginning of the trainers' activity development in the sphere of non-formal education when the question of methodical equipment was a burning issue and it was important to exchange those novelties that had been brought to us by foreign trainers. It would be interesting to analyze why the practice of mutual education is not so developed in the sphere of NGO nowadays: there's nothing to exchange, we don't have enough time for that, competition between the organizations has become tense?

Business-trainers are puzzled as to the necessity of writing books, articles. This type of activity solves a number of pragmatic problems besides it assists the development of one's own research skills. As I. Igolkina, an independent trainer-consultant, states that the book protects the copyright on one's own pieces of work, it gives an opportunity "to construct a wall protecting from a competitor", having taken interest in the book of a trainer the reader may attend a training, seminar, meeting [5]. Publication is a certain indicator of the trainer's professionalism in its own way. At the same time author's work describing in ideal author methods is accentuated. In our case trainers are mainly practitioners that prefer organizing some particular activity, they are involved in communication not research. We'd like to remind ourselves that writing articles plays an important role not only in making an introduction of an external experience but reflection on coach's activity as well which the society lacks to our mind.

In this research it is said that it's necessary to take care of enlarging the library of a coach. Some consider creating the lists of literature obligatory for the trainers to read to be essential. No doubt we represent a not less involved in reading group of professionals, although it seems that for more productive work with new books on training one needs: time for profound reading (to tell the truth books for trainers aren't read but looked through most often, or even more often the fact of having new books makes us feel comfortable), some venue where they can be discussed. In the majority of cases we hold presentations of our books or write book reviews. These forms have got their boundaries and do not provide an opportunity for a versatile interesting discussion of our (and not only our) written opuses.

Among a great number of old and new ideas in the research presented above a not so widely known form as Balint group is mentioned. We have an experience of holding seminar within the framework of the project "Trainers' School" (2nd school seminar) where we used Balint group method. This form is aimed at improving professional and psychological competence by analyzing interpersonal relationships and interaction of specialists of "communicative" professions in difficult situations in their work. One of the main tasks that Balint group method fulfills is the realization of misrepresentation and "blind spots" in interpersonal perception and self-perception, the abovementioned hinder the productive professional relationships with people.

Besides we can be astonished at finding out that our pragmatic colleagues form business sphere are interested in such a close to us form as trainer clubs. In our case we could make use of trainer circles on analogy. I guess they may become the simplest forms of support rendered to permanent development of professional competence. Problems that could be solved by these associations are vivid: experience exchange, information exchange, experimenting with feedback.

Having discussed "club" issues with more than 60 trainer–consultants from 6 cities of CIS and having visited several professional clubs in St. Petersburg and Moscow the author marked the following forms of their existence…:

- Club as a permanently operating full–time conference uniting the partisans of a certain school.
- Club as a means of search of Clients, advertising spenders, contractors (in a particular case — Club as a means of getting orders by the Club President).
- Club as one of the means of financial aid rendered to its Organizers (e.g. with the help of membership dues or certificate sale).

- Club as some corporate organization that lobbies professional interests (rate of payment for work, corporate standards of work, etc.).
- Club as a place of spending leisure time together, entertainment.
- Club as joint psychotherapy of its participants.
- Club as the school of beginners in the sphere of training.
- Club which is organized by some exiles to spite some other club.

By the way business trainers even practice out of club one evening conferences, open-club ones, e.g. Pilot-club work in this manner. One should pay attention to the fact that the activities are organized by the trainers on the basis of real life module training followed by the discussion with the third degree [7].

In our opinion the biggest problem in organizing a club or a trainer circle is its duration. I allow reminding you

"The participants of the club should quarterly if not monthly prove their right to take part in the meetings by demonstrating their professional level…

…The participants are invited to each club session individually.

…Regular appearance of the participants with the reports on the theme of the meeting (during the season each participant should make at least one report).

…Reports are made following the scheme: "handing in written theses beforehand — making corrections — making a report — report discussion". …It's advisable for the reports to contain some new information communicated by the Reporter; its practical use for the listeners; availability of concrete business tasks from practice.

…Participation in interactive discussions that are openly held on the largest in CIS and the Baltic Sea Region internet forum that is concerned with business problems. These discussions let the members of the Club and their potential Clients evaluate each other.

…The results received at the regular Club meetings are included into the publications" [6].

that our trainers' circle existed for an academic year only. For the sake of comparison we shall refer to the above-mentioned experience of St. Petersburg Club of Consultants and Trainers the organizers of which are proudly writing about their two-year experience contrasted to two or three meetings organized by some other clubs. What is the key to long life of non-formal trainer unions? Maybe we should "spy" the godsends of some other trainer clubs?

These small organizational tips can certainly be helpful but are they a necessary and sufficient condition to sustain the existence of the club? Or is human factor more important namely the fact of an organizer presence that is sure to support the framework of association coexistence by his / her energetic style? There may be some other, profound reasons. An experienced NGO trainer verbalized one thought in the course of one personal conversation: as the experience of trainings and seminars within the framework of the NGO sector is minimized there's no necessity in trainers' clubs and circles. Nowadays we are living through the stage when trainers working in different styles have their practice in the sphere of state education (e.g. various institutions of advanced vocational training). Here's an example of some other activities: it's not an example of pure trainings but of an educational course with some elements of coaching. One can't but agree with this statement but what is the consequence of it for the training practices and NGO seminars? As we know muscle atrophy without training. If a trainer doesn't have an openings "to keep fit" by not only training itself but in the sphere of advanced vocational training then we are at risk of finally falling out of the context of common trends of this sphere of education development. For example, business trainers mark that namely at present very essential changes in the direction of their work are taking place. What can be said about some changes to the content of our work or new trends?

Or is that our prognosis is too pessimistic and ungrounded?

"Business trainers as the most widespread phenomenon — professionals in illiteracy elimination — sink into oblivion of the past. …Current situation on the market of training can be characterized as being at the turning point. …The crisis manifesting itself in absence of market correspondence between demand and supply has reached its climax. The demand on training services grows in one direction and the supply of training services moves in a completely different direction. …The market supply of training services has to turn towards the Clients in the end, study their real needs and satisfy them in a competent way — everyone at the conference expressed these ideas! But in accordance with the laws of psychology that means that in reality few of those who so eloquently speak about it do so." [8].

All the abovementioned followed from the thesis on the necessity of a specially organized space, institutions of trainer's competence development. But on the face of it there's a simpler way of sustaining the trainer's professionalism – make use of feedback received after the training, seminar from participants.

On the basis of such a supposition there arises a question: **is there enough of feedback from participants for the sake of understanding what you have to change in your personal training work?**

"Learn how to criticize yourself constructively. Then no one will ever tell you something that you don't already know about yourself… These are not the trainers' mistakes that are important for our education but his / her way of dealing with them. If after a feeble training you start blaming yourself and searching for an excuse in bad behaviour of the group or some members of it, this training won't have an educational effect upon you. This reaction will on the contrary stop you from developing as a trainer" [1].

– The first reaction to the question is a unanimous and straightforward "we lack it"… This gives rise to fear that the trainer is in an illusive reality.

On the other hand one can answer the question by asking another: what do we, trainers, expect from feedback? Are these marks, praise, tips, instructions, recommendations, support or anything else? The question may be defined more exactly or change its character – be either positive or negative. It depends on expectations.

– At the very beginning of my trainer's activity I undertook an attempt to ask about the evaluation of the way the seminar was held quite straightforwardly as well as consider all the personal achievements of the participants as the effect of good work done by the trainer. There was great hope in the power of final questionnaires the function of which was mostly to improve one's own self-appraisal rather than to supply information for further changes to the activity to take place. Now it's more interesting how the participants' statements different in character (while the seminar is being held, feedback questionnaires) can be transformed into feedback for the trainer himself / herself, namely how should they be chosen. In other words these are difficulties that one faces while translating words from the "statements of a participant" language into the "demand forwarded to a trainer" language. As there is a gap between these two languages maybe we should resign ourselves to the fact that there can't be straightforward answers providing the awaited feedback resulting from this or that aspect of training from the participants.

– Generally speaking it's amusing to compare the participants' feedback questionnaires of the elementary level and an experienced trainer. It's more often that a beginner-trainer immediately dashes to read the questionnaires and essays that are like hot cakes, an experienced trainer calmly puts them into the box with handouts and other stationery nick-nacks left after the training. Why does this happen? I'll take the risk of making a supposition that the questionnaire answers provided, with a rare exception, as a result of various trainings and seminars look much alike. This may happen because the questionnaire questions and the modes of trainings are generally speaking similar? Once I was quite amazed by the content of the participants' feedback presented on different trainer internet sites. In principle it reminds me our participants' feedback as well very much. This problem of lack of a concrete (specific) character of feedback makes it difficult for us to use it as a means of development, and namely this function is traditionally a priority function for feedback. Feedback should be for the sake of further changes not just mere ascertaining. This idea is fixed as part and parcel of a stage of quality change management (on the whole the educational process in the process of training in particular): making projects – carrying them out – feedback – making projects. In this case personally I lack such feedback from the participants, a co-trainer, that feedback which could be used to change the obtained results or the process that took place.

– It goes without saying that this problem is a multilevel one. Absence of a specific character of the feedback may show a participant latent inability to verbalize, describe how he was / was not affected within the educational process. By the way the practice of writing a resume also requires the ability to formulate what has changed in a form of an articulate text: I'm able to, I can, I do understand, etc. but a reflective competence of a participant is just one side of the problem. **The second side is that the educational processes that take place are not evident to the trainer himself / herself.** This side of the problem highlights vulnerability of the trainings and seminars that are planned on the basis of the educational model introduced by D.Kolb in experiment that was based on the priority of "bringing up". One can get this process of "bringing up" muddled up while trying to escape the translation of ready-made knowledge to that degree that the meaning, process, and result of the training will be lost.

In this sense a trainer should honestly and realistically formulate hidden and clear aims of what he / she does and define the processes that provide their accomplishment to make feedback work in the function of management of the changes. In connection with that a trainer should formulate the questions and the form of feedback. This also requires certain trainer skills. For example, "the price" of the question "What are the three main results of the training?" is very low from the point of view of the potential of feedback as the instrument of management. It's evident that the answers like: gained new experience, got acquainted with new methods, exchanged experience, etc. do not provide us with too many opportunities for changes. In order not to be that egoistic we should state that this question doesn't have any potential for development even for the participant himself / herself.

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One more characteristic tendency is the prevalence of participants' emotional reactions. This tendency hinders work with feedback that is aimed at changing oneself within the trainer's activity. Consequently we are facing the traditional problem of an educational event evaluation on the level "reaction" in accordance with the model of Kirkpatrick [9]. Though while gaining experience a trainer may acquire a scornful and condescending treatment of emotional splashes in the questionnaires of the participants it's worthwhile gaining control over an upsurge of such a feeling (trainer's irritation because of praise) and consider the fact of its presence as a necessary but insufficient condition of trainings and seminars. This commonplace tendency starts to unwind in a different way when you find out that for example in the practice of the system of MBA education regardless of the advanced level of its students the teachers regularly experience fear of classes and a tense atmosphere in the auditorium. They undertake much effort to change the situation and create a so-called atmosphere of trust, which is being highly praised.

In general the question of usefulness of feedback is so complicated and topical that it deserves to be discussed within the framework of some other practice — coaching for NGO trainers. Though it's possible that having gained popularity with business trainings and personnel management, it may not settle down in informal education in Belarus at present. It's expensive. In the given situation it's not so adequate to offer it to trainers whose opportunities of any work with their target groups are on the whole limited. On the other hand we hope that the trainer who finished a course of an effective coaching where she / he gained experience of introspection, understanding of his / her own activity may be flexible and have an opportunity to look for solution of different problems in a stressful situation without any pain while forming a group, preparing, holding as well as living through the consequences of a seminar or a training. That is why we may soon face the moment when the preparation of coaches for NGO trainers will take place.

Supposing the trainers' association should strengthen its former and create new opportunities of advanced vocational training while overcoming hardships. Let's define its specifics more clearly, having thought about: **what type of education should it be for you to be ready to pay for it (spending money or time)? What would you like the education to be like?**

"A good" seminar produce an IMPRESSION.

"An effective" seminar causes CHANGES (in one's vision, understanding, strategies) and REALIZATION of these changes in our experience. This is the very education." [2].

The questions are without doubts topical as we being adult students don't have that much lifetime to spend it on "no matter what kind of education to be laid in store". Mere understanding of the specific character of an adult student that trainers forget quite often at present includes the following: time becomes shorter in adult students' minds. Thus understanding of **the perspective of knowledge use: from a postponed one to an urgent one** changes. Special value of lifetime and an aspiration to decide all the life and professional problems with the help of education steer adult students' orientation into obtaining a result. He/ she is preoccupied with how to learn to do something in a quick, easy and cheap way [10]. Of course adult education has got a lot of other specific nuances that have not once been discussed at the conferences and NGO festival, but things aren't moving, if so they haven't gone far. Understanding of this problem with the trainers' association surely exists, in confirmation of this one can get acquainted with the poll carried out among the leaders of public organizations. It was published in "Educator" magazine (№1(7), 2006) under the title "Knowledge we share must have an approximate character" [11]. The problem won't be solved soon and it's characteristic of the whole sphere of adult education.

— Anyway if we are to return to personal grounds in case of these questions, my readiness to pay (in a broad meaning of the word) for my education may be predetermined by the name of the expert; a claim to be an original model of a seminar; the theme that corresponds to the question or problem that troubles me; a detailed, transparent programme (I wouldn't like to buy a pig in a poke).

"What do we pay attention to when we choose a seminar?

- To the **name** of the author (leader, trainer, and teacher), the name of the company…
- It's good that the trainer has got an **information base** (a number of articles, books, video tapes, site), where besides ads one can find theoretical materials, types of problems solved by this company and trainer, evaluation and results of those who finished the course…
- To **opinions of some other people** — we make use of rumours, opinions of former participants…
- To the **ad of the seminar…**

We can also make calls to the indicated numbers and gather information there" [2].

— It's easier to answer the question about the method of education in an abstract way. Then general thoughts come to your mind that one has to teach in an active, interactive way changing different types of activities, stimulating me to speak up as when keep silent nothing important will ever happen to me. To answer the question sincerely I'd say I'd like to be taught in a "natural" way.

"One of the main peculiarities of active meth–ods of education is a compulsory activation of the process of thinking (forced activity), a student has to be active regardless of his wish. In comparison with traditional methods active ones are more efficient and weaker and the same time: as activity is first and foremost programmed by the method and realized by the subject, when the method is no more used the activity of the subject is over as well. So will there be any activity after the function of the method that shapes it is exercised, the question remains open for discussion. In this case one should also answer the question to what degree this or that active method pene–trates into the mechanism of self–development of the subject?" [12, p.39].

— I can't offer anything more effective than to apply to the styles of holding a class to be through with a ponderous and forced "activity for everyone without an exception". If I go on speaking about myself and the style I prefer it would be good if they teach me without any haste, providing me with the space for personal work. Generally speaking I'd like to have an opportunity to choose types of activities, tasks, and to have an opportunity to draw my own program of my participation in the seminar, to concentrate. The latter is the most important for me. Most of the seminars and trainings that I have taken part in were held where the prevailing situation was that one of time trouble, emotional and intellectual anguish.

In conclusion we'd like to mention that nowadays there so-called "navigators" that were devised for adult education. They offer a system of criteria in accordance with which one can choose the form and style of education. These are very useful means that may even suit our work. As a rule these lists of criteria of choice provide the statements of what should be looked for in the description of training, what should one expect from it and what one shouldn't. We could add to the list the question of a participant to himself / herself: what should I be prepared for. (For example, it would be useful for both the trainer and the participant to realize that one can't master most of the skills in 2–3 days, the process of education presupposes one's readiness to call himself / herself in question, etc.).

Having looked through what has been written we are aware that the text contains more hints of different character about something rather than an integral subjective image of an ideal trainer professionalism development. Although we may try to give an "elementary answer" to the raised question: the system of professional competence development must be specially designed — we should introduce the practice of supervision, coaching, Balint group; create clubs, circles that would embody the space for trainer's demand satisfaction in the terms of self-development. One should also be taught how to formulate the demand.

Disclosing the image of professional development of a non-formal education trainer we were trying to stop and reflect on certain issues of trainer competence development. **Consequently the continuation of this reflection should follow.**

Translated by Olga Verbova

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National Consciousness and Civic Education*

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On December, 15th, 2006 in frames of the Week of non-formal education organized by a network of the Organizations of Civic Education in Grodno, a round table on a topic "The place of Belarusian national consciousness in formation of socially active Belarusian citizens" took place. This theme was offered for consideration in a context of the purposes of civic education in formation of Belarusian citizens.

In work of a round table took part representatives of Grodno public associations, participants of Evenings of non-formal education in Grodno (non-engaged youth) and the invited visitors: professor Alexander Ostrovsky, the leader of PA "Pahodnya" Mikola Taranda, intellectual Yury Patsyupa, the priest of Greco-catholic church in Grodno father Andrey, constant author of the magazine "Arhae" Danila Zhukovsky and others.

The problem caused the discussion about a place of national consciousness in formation of social activity of Belarusian citizens and a place of civic education in this process, has risen in a result of the undertaken discussion as in official (academician A. Rubinov), and in oppositional (liberal and national-democratic) circles. In oppositional part discussion about national consciousness and its role has sharply raised in connection to discussion of language of broadcasting of German radio station on the territory of Belarus. Discussion in opposition circle has revealed two essentially different approaches to understanding of a role and value of Belarusian language, Belarusian national values, and Belarusian consciousness in formations of modern Belarusian society.

Official position, in A. Rubinov's interpretation and so called liberal part of opposition, in some parts are relative. The essence of their position is that there is no necessity to recreate Belarusian language, even more, it is impossible to recreate it in modern conditions, and modern Belarusian culture and nation are to be built on the basis of Russian culture which has a dominating position. The formal divergence between an official position and a position of "Russian" parts of opposition can be reduced to different understanding of a basis of Russian-speaking culture: one see the Soviet heritage as a basis, and others do not see any heritage at all. They suggest building new Belarusian community from a pure page, filling and introducing virtual values which would correspond to the democratic state with market economy.

National focused part of opposition and Belarussian-speaking intellectual circles ("Nasha Niva", "Arhae" etc.) see opportunity of construction of modern Belarusian nation and the democratic state being based only on Belarusian language, Belarusian national culture, and national traditions. From their point of view, only Belarusian language and national values are capable of gathering the nation and making its competitive among other nations. Belarusian-speaking part of the opposition thinks that there is no need to borrow values artificially and to impose them to the society as their own. It is necessary to turn to the own historical heritage and to take as a basis those values and traditions which were checked up by time and which correspond to Belarusian national character.

In frames of a round table the following questions were discussed:

1) What do we understand by national consciousness?
2) Could any other idea, for example, religious, become a basis for unification of Belorusians as one community? What could it be?
3) Does national consciousness influence formation of social activity of the person? What place does national consciousness take in formation of the citizen?

Work of the round table was constructed in the following way: first the report by Ales Ostrovsky was heard (see Addition), questions on it were asked. Professor focused on interpretation of reasons why he considers national values – including Belarusian national values – a basis for building the nation. From his point of view, the vital issue which demands the decision and is acute for each person as the representative of national community is a direction of activity, a direction of development. Finding direction of activity of the person is always closely connected with national values. The person cannot be developed outside the national values. Belarusian

* Кузьмініч І. Нацыянальная свядомасць і грамадзянская адукацыя // Адукатар №2 (12), 2007. – С. 16–20.



citizen, Belarusian society cannot be developed on other values, as soon as being based on Belarusian language and values of Belarusian national culture.

Later on the report by Jury Patsyupy was heard and discussed. In continuation of the questions raised by Alexander Ostrovsky, he stated that personally for him the discussion on what is possible to consider Belarusian values, whether Belarusian nation can be developed basing on Russian language which today has a dominant position in our society – is a dispute between national and so called "Creole" projects. The main difference between these two projects is that the first sees the future of the nation, descending from own historical heritage and cultural properties, and "Creole" is based on appropriation of another's language and another's traditions as own, and building new cultural tradition based on the borrowed language and values. Examples of "Creole" projects can be Ireland or countries of Latin America. From the point of view of Jury, "Creole" project is not long-ranged in Belarus, at least, by two reasons: 1) Russian language and culture have no base, and, the main thing, no infrastructures for existence on the territory of Belarus; 2) "Creole" project is unprofitable as the history of development of nations which have chosen the given way shows, that on a world scene they came out only in 500 year of adaptation, after full assimilation of another language and culture as their own .

From the point of view of father Andrey, the church has been developing together with the community and the society, and in this development acquires the most successful ways of the organization of the society, tries to get adapted to them. Today the church recognizes existence of nations and do not see an opportunity of development religious aspects without or outside of national.

Mikola Taranda gave examples from work of "Pahodnya", its members, and also numerous examples from life of well-known today cultural, public, political leaders in Belarus and from Belarusian circles in Poland, Kazakhstan and Russia when through formation of national consciousness of the person they became socially active and this activity was shown in public, political or religious life. From his point of view, there is a direct link between comprehension of the national identity and the further civic activity.

Danila Zhukovsky appealed to the public to be attentive to made statements as the topic appears extremely important, and this means the discussion should be made on the high level.

Participants of a round table agreed to the following conclusions made in a result of the discussion.

1) In frames of the round table national consciousness was understood as a set of historical facts, feelings, attitudes, values, and ways of activity united by the national language, culture and general history which people admit as national and which are directed to establishment of spiritual links between carriers and unite them.

2) There is no more effective mechanism of unity in borders of community, as unity on the basis of national values in condition of economic, social, and cultural development during the postindustrial period. There are different variants of construction of national values. National and "Creola" projects were examined more detailed. The last was recognized by a round table as inefficient.

3) In modern political, social, cultural and economic conditions comprehension of a national identity, as a rule, influences necessity to take an active civic position. There is a direct link between perception of national values and public activity.

In Additions it is suggested to learn the theses prepared for a basic discussion on a round table.

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ADDITION to the ROUND TABLE "The Place of national consciousness in formation of socially active citizens". Submitted theses by A.Ostrovsky, A.Kravtsevich, I.Kuzminich.

National Consciousness and Democracy

Ales Astrouski

Any national consciousness, not tended to chauvinism or weakened to total absence, appears a constructive factor of public existence. It is necessary for the full-value human life, the organization of each concrete society and all mankind – for their integration, harmonious arrangement and progressive development.

It's obvious from scientific positions that a healthy society is a system of citizens, instead of their simple sum. That means that in society citizens and their groups should be connected by natural mutually beneficial links. Basis of such links lays in national values (language, culture, symbols, history, a gene pool, world view, the ethnic territory, overall aims) which all the nations have and develop. Each society has other natural links – between fathers and children, women and men – but they unite not all the society, but only its separate parts.

Natural national links function due to interaction of two components. The first is **general information-educational environment** (from national traditions to educational system and mass-media) were national values are remembered and are propagandized. Such an environment plays a role of original national glue. The second component is each concrete citizen who perceives itself an integral part of the nation, the country-state and, in a result, the **legal owner of the land of his ancestors.** Such a citizen-owner is capable of including in the list of his own values objective values of the nation (in this case his world view will execute function of a receptor for linkage with mentioned "glue") and so to be an element of corresponding national society.

It is necessary to ascertain, that only described citizen and the society have those properties which provide becoming the most progressive form of the state arrangement – **substantial democracy** (when authorities compelled to realize **objective interests of the society**). The highest public value directed to the future, which is maximal disclosing of creative potential of all the society, can be full realized only in these borders.

It's evident that the healthy society, united by national links is obvious, is necessary not only to oneself. It is necessary also to each separate person for realization of his most important vital need (disclosing of own vital creative potential), for a life high-grade, filled by pleasure and senses. It is necessary also for all the mankind for rather not crisis natural unlimited progressive development. To provide the mankind the specified features of its own existence, it is necessary to consist of a plenty of separate discrete parts – nationally painted societies, the nations-states.

Partial **cosmopolitan destruction** of system of national values, including destruction of people's attributes of national consciousness in their world view, prevents people from realizing their vital purposes and leads to their sad, senseless, necrophilous existence, to impossibility to provide natural unity in a society and existence of a mode of substantial democracy, impossibility to realize public potential, delay of humanistic progress of a mankind etc. Thus, such destruction **is a crime.** The analysis shows, that such a destructive influence on a society, as a rule, is necessary to different socially-parasitic forces. For example, the most obvious parasitic forces on Belarusian political field are: local bureaucracy, the Russian imperial bureaucracy, the international financial oligarchy. As their influence appears exclusively destructive and criminal, it should be stopped first last and all the time, and its initiators and executors must be condemned and punished.



Image of Modern Belarusian Man

Alyaksandar Kraucevich

What is modern Belarusian man? This question today can be answered in sometimes inconsistent ways. My answer is the following: "This is a person who not only considers himself Belarusian, but also uses Belarusian language in a private life". At conference in Poland from the inhabitant of Mogilov (the philologist, candidate of sciences) I heard, that she is "classical Belarusian, because does not know Belarusian language and speaks Russian". I have declared this Mogilov lady, that she is rather not "classical", but pathological Belarusian.

Sometimes it's possible to hear even from highly scientific foreign experts, that Belarusians are special nation, because in fact they do not wish to feel themselves nation. As a matter of fact, it is an erroneous conclusion, because Belarusians are typical people of the Middle-East Europe, who have got to atypical enough and extremely adverse historical situation. Last two hundred years without its own statehood, these people experienced extremely strong assimilative pressure as from the East, and from the West. The most harmful blow in the newest history was a physical destruction of hundreds thousand people from national intelligence during time of Stalin reprisals and the World War II. I am convinced that if these people would remain alive, today we would not have Lukashenko. These hundred thousand educated people would be everywhere – in administration, education, armies, polices. Very possibly, Sasha Lukashenko would be educated not by Trashanok, but by one from those Belarusians killed by Stalin, and the pupil would have a name not Sasha, but Ales, and never would become a dictator. But the place of victims was borrowed by visitors from Russia who educated our fathers and us. Now we have what we have.

I consider that for definition of Belarusian man it is necessary to use the same criteria, as for representatives of other "normal" nations. The main attribute of modern Belarusian, as well as the Lithuanian, the Polish, the Ukrainian or Russian man is native language. Therefore Russian-speaking Belarusians are not normal Belarusians. However, it is necessary to distinguish also those who feel, sometimes unconsciously, this abnormality. They are not against the national revival, they are ready to give children in Belarusian schools, but they have no strength to resist aggressive anti-Belarusian reality. These people should be cooperated with. Similar examples are known in history: the Czech German-speaking aristocrats financed Czech schools in XIX century.

Normal Belarusians are in minority in the country and it makes it more difficult to remain Belarusians. It needs great daily and almost every-minute strength to resist a Russian-speaking environment and to remain in Belarusian cultural space. We are in minority, but the truth is on our side. Russian-speaking Belarusians are Soviet people with double consciousness – as if patriots, but do not know the native. Many of them are tired of this bifurcation and wish to be oneself everywhere. I am sure the time will come, and we shall give them such an opportunity.

Notes on Definition of Our Position

Ihar Kuzminich

Activities in official political circles, ideas which are mentioned by academician A.Rubinov, activity of youth structure BRYU, as well as activity of oppositional political parties and pro-democratic public associations show the evidence of interest in forming social activity among youth. In other words, both authorities and independent public associations understand need in socially-active citizens and even act in the given direction, using educational institutions, public associations, and public initiatives as institutes of civic education. But valuable filling of each position, as well as understanding of the purpose of social activity, are essentially different. Today at least three positions in education of socially-active citizen which are realized through formal and non-formal civic education were outlined. We'll try to examine these positions.

The official position is based on the necessity to prepare the socially-active citizen, which, being based on the adapted Soviet values, would become an active actualizer of policy of the ruling circles.

The opposition, from our point of view, has at least two basic approaches. The first states that to come to a ruling power, it is necessary to create wider front, to attach a maximum quantity of socially active citizens, to involve them in the given process. That's why the basic tendency is in transferring ways of the activity based on values, not connected with the concrete Belarusian national consciousness. The given approach aims to gain freedom, and only later to understanding, how to build Belarusian society.

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The second approach states that it is impossible to gain freedom, not being united around Belarusian national values, Belarusian language, and thus not having created base for support of political changes. From this point of view, it is impossible to gain freedom not knowing what for and for whom it is necessary. Without answers to these questions freedom will lead to new dictatorship. Freedom is necessary for building modern Belarusian state, and it is possible only through creation of the high-grade nation, united by national language and values.

Divergences in approaches of opposition concern the term "Belarusian". From the point of view of the first part which is based on so called civic concept of forming the nation, the term "Belarusian" means any phenomenon which occurs in territory of Belarus. New Belarusian culture and new Belarusian language can be built on the base of Russian language (Creola variant). The second part of opposition is based on the ethnic concept of forming the nation. It means that Belarusian considered being only Belarusian language and culture.

Each of three mentioned positions notices necessity of creation of the new culture, the new consciousness, and new values. Each position not only encloses a different meaning in a concept of Belarusian values, but sees the process of creation of Belarusian society in different ways. Depending on a choice of a concrete position there will be defined and programmed a special strategy of the further development of Belarusian community.

In a case of realization of an official position, Belarusian community can collide with inability to adapt traditions, values, world view of the Soviet period to needs of modern market relations and principles of the democratic state that will lead to the new ideological crisis.

The choice offered by so called Russian-speaking wing of opposition, is based on necessity to borrow values and traditions and to introduce them to Belarusian ground, using as the basic those language and culture that have objectively developed in our territory. Transferring and sticking to new values and their development in Russian language will fix a complex of national deficiency for ever and will lead to division of Belarusian society. Each new generation will produce part of young people who will look back to Belarusian-speaking tradition as it is authentic Belarusian, and will struggle for its revival. Besides the community, constructed on the borrowed values, on the borrowed ways of activity and cultural traditions, will always be forced to be in vector of developments of those nations whose ways of activity were adopted.

The approach of Belarusian-speaking part of opposition calls not to simple and literal revival-reconstruction of values which were typical for Belarusian society in the past, but their creative understanding and introduction to Belarusian national consciousness, based on modern conditions and considering history of development of these values in the past.



Assimilation of new values is an original revolution in consciousness of the person. Transition to Belarusian language is a double Revolution. Transition to Belarusian language means also simultaneous acceptance of standard for Belarusian-speaking environment values, ideals, and ways of activity. Transition to Belarusian language is not just assimilation of new values, but it is daily demonstration of the acquired values in usual environment (in society, family, with colleagues). It is a qualitative change of a person, and its behavior. Transition to Belarusian language is an evidence of the fact that a person chooses a complex way with the outlined civic position as a way of life. This transition is hard for the person, but passed it once, the person burns the bridges. There is no way back, there is only way forward. The way back is treason first of all to oneself.

On the other hand, Belarusian language can become the reason which will really unite people, help to broaden principles of solidarity and mutual support typical for Belarusian-speaking environment even in today's conditions.

Divergences in approaches to nation-and state formation pull behind itself divergences in wanted results. Authorities through civic education try to capture all the youth. Choosing such a wide target group in combinations with primary formalization in education system, training, as a rule, is reduced to transferring elementary public competencies with use of ideological stamps and can be effective mainly in relation to apolitical part of youth. One part of pro-democratic organizations stakes on quantity of socially-active. But in this aspiration it forced to struggle with political authority for the sector of apolitical youth, competing with the more effective for this target group state system of civic education. Belarusian-speaking part of the pro-democratic organizations tends to quality of those who has an active civic position.

Translated by Alena Lugovtsova



More than just a language*

Vitaut Rudnik

There are different approaches to understanding of purposes and methods of civic education in Belarus among engaged people. However, there is one more principle question – question of language of education.

It is impossible to avoid this question talking about civic education, about forming civil position. Language is one of those factors that unite people and integrate societies. Not in vain in many countries of the world the clause of getting citizenship is speaking the state language. In Belarus that is divided strongly ideologically and by confessions, language gets an extreme value, including the sphere of civic education.

Sometimes it happens to hear from participants of trainings reproaches for "why haven't you warned, that training will be in Belarusian language"? What have we come to! In Belarus people are offended not by not-knowing Belarusian languages, but by using it by others! Do we bring up such "citizens"? It's they who will carry Belarusian people with them in all spheres of life tomorrow? When yes, I'll think whether to follow them.

In 2001 on pages of the magazine "The third sector", I wrote, that time has come to think once again of the language policy in sphere of civic education. If we wish to have as an output educated people with an active civil position, we should offer them such an educational level both of us wouldn't be shamed of. If we wish to have as an output citizens who will live and work for this country, civic education probably should be based on the national base, on Belarusian language in particular.

We shouldn't forget that except knowledge and skills we transmit to people certain values. The feeling of belonging to this nation, respect for its history, independence, and the native language – the attitude towards these concepts from the side of people we educate often directly depends on our attitude. Two days of training in Belarusian language sometimes does what incendiary speeches in Belarusian on meetings or from pages of newspapers can't do: allow people to throw off complexes, to become sure that Belarusian language brings light of new knowledge.

The language question has also a big moral aspect. Not once it happened to hear, that trainer's work in Russian (in sense of language of training) is more effective: it's used by the majority of people while Belarusian language many people even do not understand well. Such an approach, however, from my point of view, only charms immortal spirits of those who during last century have diligently annihilated Belarusian language, culture, intelligence. Annihilate for Belarusians never become Belarusians, and Belarussia not to become Belarus. To understand logic of those who did it is easy – lenins, stalins, chruschevs, brezhnevs together with the helpers and the followers were building the society, "a new community of the Soviet people without kin".

Integral tools of all these "builders" were total russification shameful consequences of which can't be noticed only by blind and deaf persons. It is possible to take a simplest way by carrying out educational programs, giving out manuals and other educational literature in Russian and to explain it in a way that it is more convenient for people, that they will understand it better etc. But isn't it a moral betray to repressed and neglected Belarusian language, to its best carriers which were shot and hanged, compelled to live in fear for itself and the relatives only because they wrote and spoke Belarusian and cared for Belarus? Leaving everything the same, as more convenient, don't we take the side of those chastisers of Belarus of all times? Isn't it a case of honor for Belarusian educators to be in the first row of those who cares for Belarusian rebirth?

I do not hope, that all our educators (from ACA and not only) tomorrow will start trainings in Belarusian. But what prevents from starting to send notifications, to make new publications in Belarusian (or in two language versions)? Ignorance of language? Shame for educators… Or is it easier?

Totalitarian and non-Belarusian inherently system of official education should create alternative in the form of nationally directed, democratic in contents and high in system level of civic education. Time will come, and lifelength in this direction will lie in the base of new Belarusian educational system, which will be built and developed by us and those whom we educate today.

Translated by Alena Lugovtsova

* Руднік В. Больш, чым проста "мова" // Адукатар №2 (12), 2007. С. 21.

One Circle, Two Circles…

Three Hundred Circles – Is It a Lot Or a Few?*

Aliona Velichko, Inna Gubarevich



Aliona Velichko – trainer of public union "Education Center "POST", informational-methodical coordinator of the Resource program of study circles.

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Often the quantity indicator is objective and convincing criterion of an estimation of efficiency of any activity. It can be explained and analyzed. Therefore, we have decided to start conversation on a situation with study circles in Belarus from this point.

It is now hard enough to mention an exact figure of how many study circles has been lead since 2001 when the Swedish colleagues have decided to share with us a unique and very effective and popular in their country method of adult education. It is possible only to give an approximate data proceeding from quantity of the circles supported by educational public organizations. For the present moment it has been lead about 300 study circles in different cities of Belarus, the most active were Minsk, Gomel, Grodno and Lida. Approximately 2500 people were involved in them. Also it should be mentioned that some study circles have been leading without any support of public organizations. They are organized by leaders who have been trained at seminars, or read a manual for leaders of study circles in which they are described in detail.

Nevertheless, despite of impressive figure 300 and considering the period of five years, for the country with ten million populations there could be more study circles. Why have we received such a result? What promoted and what interfered with dynamics of development of study circles in Belarus during these five years? Let's try answering these questions and formulating problems which will be necessary to solve in the near future.

The period since 2001 to 2006 can be named the "development" of study circles in Belarus. It's characterized by:

- **Wide scope of target groups and themes of circles.**

After acquaintance with the Swedish experience of non-formal adult education some public organizations have been interested in adaptation and distribution of study circles in Belarus. They has been held a seminar on preparation of leaders were participants tried not only to understand and realize features of study circle, its difference from other forms of training, but to work out the program of "pilot" study circles, to define target groups, time and a place of carrying it out. There were no restrictions in choice of a theme and questions for discussion, as study circle supposes openness for participation of all the adults. So, public organizations and their leaders have been interested in receiving as much of various experience of carrying out of "pilot" study circles as possible.

The analysis of experience has shown that study circles mostly are popular among students and persons of advanced age. Basically women prevailed among participants.

The most popular themes of study circles were those connected with personal development and development of professional competence of participants of various professions, for example, "Relations between men and women", "Methods of active learning in high school", "How to find a good job?", "Female leadership", etc. Also themes which offered new knowledge in various spheres of living were popular, for example, "Aromatherapy", "Chinese tea ceremony", "Astrology". Interest among population excited themes connected with studying culture of the city, education of children, studying languages.

* Величко А. Губаревич И. Раз кружок, два кружок…Триста кружков – это много или мало? // Адукатар, №1 (11) 2007. – С. 21–24.



- **Carrying out study circles for leaders was a goal itself, but the leaders did not consider it as a mean for making changes in a social life.**

Initially the main purpose of leaders was to adapt study circle to the Belarusian conditions. Therefore, the primary goals of their activity were: definition of opportunities and restrictions of study circle as a method of non-formal adult education; satisfaction of cognitive needs of its participants, finding optimal means of work with target groups.

Such a situation is quite explainable and comprehensible to the initial stage. However, from a position of prospects and main principles it becomes clear, that activity of study circles should be directed to achievement of goals which public organizations have and which are connected with social changes. And such a tendency has already appeared in activity of leaders, owing to opportunities to exchange experience and to discuss the successes and difficulties at carrying out of study circles within the limits of seminars for skilled leaders, consultations with trainers and information-methodical coordinators of the Resource program of study circles in Belarus.

In this connection, it is possible to mark out two types of study circles which differently reach these purposes.

The first type of study circles supposes rendering indirect influence on changes in a society, promotes increase of activity of citizens. These are circles were participants examine the most different themes, and leaders, building their activity on such principles as taking responsibility, aspire at certain changes in a social life though it's difficult to reveal and back trace them.

The second type of study circles – the circles supported by public organizations and used by them as means for achievement of definite purposes and tasks which are connected with the activity of organization. For example, organization with ecological orientation makes circles on ecological subjects, solving problems of protection of the environment.

In the conclusion we should note that public organizations can play an important role in strengthening the tendency of development of study circles in Belarus. Their help could consist in constant coordination of activity of leaders, in searching and offering rooms for activity, materials for carrying out of study circles, in rendering methodical support, in gathering the participants, distribution of the information, and also in joint definition of a direction of development of movement of educational circles and their purposes.

- **Low activity of public organizations in use of educational circles in their activity.**

If educational circles are one of the forms of working with population as seminars and trainings, why so few organizations use this form of activity?

One of the reasons is that this method of informal education is slowly spreading among various public organizations, due to weak advertising company.

The following reason is probably the fact that on the presentations for various target groups advantages of →



educational circles and its perspectives in work with the population are not vivid enough for participants.

Practice shows that absence of financing of study circles does not promote their carrying out, especially in those organizations were voluntary work is not developed enough or were are no projects which suppose realization of activity by means of educational circles.

One more reason is a huge work load of those people who are active and ready to lead circles. Educational circles demand the certain preparation and time which leaders simply are short of. It's difficult also to organize circles one after another in a short period of time.

- **Absence of big customers on study circles (i.e. those institutions were study circles would be in demand as the form of work with people).**

Public organizations potentially could become one of big customers, however due to reasons set above, it has not occurred yet. At present moment there is no big customer on carrying out of study circles in Belarus. Though in Sweden, for example, the big customers are every possible movements: trade unions, associations of farmers, the church, parties and the State.

- **Aspiration to reduce to the common denominate understanding of features of study circle and its carrying out by different public organizations which support them in their activity.**

In the period from 2001 to 2006 many seminars and trainings of leaders of study circles were lead by different public organizations engaged in informal education of adults. Among trainer's community there was an attempt to make a succession of programs, trainer's experience, and also a coordination of approaches in understanding of the concept of study circle. And still … It was not always possible, so as trainers of different organizations had different views of purposes and problems of study circles, different approaches to activity in frames of their organizations. All this have an effect on result of adaptation of study circle to the purposes and problems which stand in our society and in front of our organizations. Therefore, there is nothing surprising that each organization sees the development of study circles in Belarus in its own way.

The seminars for skilled leaders helped much in coordination of difference in understanding of concepts of study circles, in discussion of their development in our country. Such seminars were a platform for an experience exchange and coordination of views at many questions connected to preparation and carrying out of study circles, their purposes and problems.

It is very important to keep to the main principles incorporated in activity of study circles in order not to loose the idea of educational circles as form of development of civil activity of participants, despite of all variety of nuances in vision of development of study circles in Belarus. And the principles are: respect of opinion of participants, acute topic or questions, and also a role of a "leader" as one of participants, instead of a role of a "teacher".

- **Adaptation of the Swedish model of study circles to condition ofs Belarusian reality, and arrangement of accents between new and already known in educational circles.**

Process of adaptation of study circles to Belarusian conditions occurs slowly and has its own features.

For example, participants of seminars for leaders, having got acquainted with the given method, do not use it completely, but embed its elements into the other forms of educational activity. For example, lecturers use some elements of educational circles in the organization of self studies of students.

Educational circle is often compared to children's out-of-school circle, for example, on needlework. The invitation from leaders to study circle is followed by the reaction: "We have already passed it, we have already known it! It is so similar to…. ", "Will we embroider there?"

The main distinction of study circles from children's circles is that there is no teacher here, there is the leader, and the responsibility for preparation of meetings and achievement of the purposes lies on all participants.

Unfortunately, tradition of regular meetings in free time in order to solve problems, to study, to discuss, to reach goals by joint efforts is practically lost in our society. That's why the potential participants not always see necessity to come to an educational circle and to do something.

Those who are familiar with psychotherapy tend to compare educational circles with psychotherapeutic groups. But the main characteristic of the first is their social orientation though the psychological component also is important in its activity.

Those who does not have associations neither with children, nor with psychological groups, have suspicions

– is it a sect? Sometimes it is possible to hear such a reaction: "People gather in unknown place, in houses, do not take money, speak about goodwill", "Free-of-charge cheese you know where lies. There's something dirty about it". And it is possible to understand the people intimidated by different sects. But the study circle is not a sect first of all because a sect is easy to enter, but it is difficult to leave. Educational circle you can leave at any moment. Here one doesn't impose values though its activity is constructed on development of such values as respect, activity, and the responsibility.

There is also a resistance to a manner of organization of activity in study circles. Participants say to the leader: "We do not want; we do not know how to prepare a material. Better you tell everything, and we will write it down". Such a reaction often happens at first two-three meetings of an educational circle, but gradually participants start to be involved in process, and they like to prepare meetings together. Time should pass to realize one's own responsibility for the behavior and activity.



Leaders often should answer the question: "And what is the difference between a sit-round gathering on kitchen which is always popular by us and the gatherings were every possible question and problems are discussed?" The study circle differs from a kitchen sit-round gathering, first of all by presence of a specific goal and the curriculum; they are discussed not to "wag one's tongue", but to find the decision, to coordinate positions, to construct strategy and to reach the common planned result.

- **Gradual promotion of idea of educational circles into the Belarusian society**

Carrying out study circles works for popularization of this method of informal adult education among the society. It's evident because some members of circles start to organize them, not having special training. Or participants continue to meet each other simply having thought up a new theme.

Presentations of educational circles and seminars for leaders, positive responses of participants, writing articles, carrying out of the festival of study circles – all this promotes distribution of the idea of study circles to a society. Let it even sometimes be called not "circles", but simply turn to initiative groups on studying foreign language, watching films or groups of support of young mothers.

Such a situation tells that people study to communicate, discuss. They rally, and it is one of the most important goals of the study circle.

Now some leaders of circles work as lecturers in high schools and try to integrate circles into the work with students. It can be considered as gradual, slow integration with commercial and public sector.

Proceeding from features of a first stage of development of educational circles in Belarus and results of the round table which happened within the limits of Festival of study circles, the following directions of their development appeared:

– The organization of a constant advertising campaign of study circles, using various opportunities: radio, newspapers, the Internet, CDs with the information about results of activity of an educational circle. The original idea which sounded on a round table is invitation of journalists to meetings in a role of participants who in the further will publish notes and articles about circles.

– In parallel with distribution of the information on educational circles it's necessary to explain what democracy is by clear for the population language, for example, through such words, as responsibility, activity;

– Search of public associations which could become "providers" of educational circles and which will render various support to its leaders: methodical, distribution of the information, granting a premise, setting participants, discussion of the further development of educational circles in Belarus;

– Search those who are interested in carrying out of study circles among not engaged population, among parties, trade unions, public organizations;

– Continuation of preparation of new leaders of study circles;

– Continuation of improvement of professional skill of leaders through carrying out of seminars, round tables, conferences, consultations, and electronic communication. Result of their constant interaction will promote creation of community of leaders of educational circles;

– Putting educational circles in system which will result in creation of the social institute, carrying out various functions, including, strategic and tactical development of educational circles at different levels: local, regional and republican;

– Results of the study circle should have a resonance in a society, for example, to make an action according to a theme of a circle, to organize a holiday with attraction of new people, to make a CD with results of work and to distribute it among interested people.

Translated by Alena Lugovtsova

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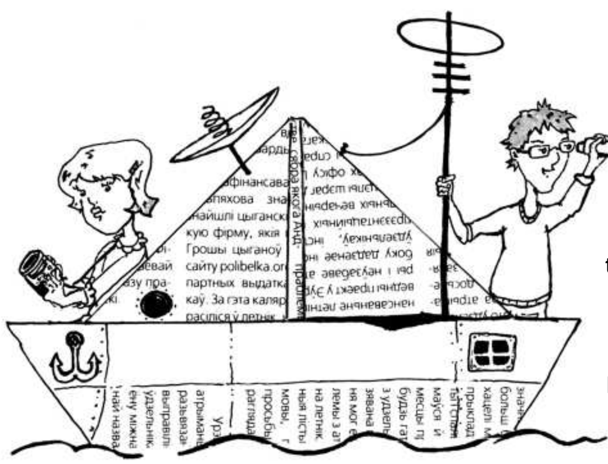
Wild! Young! Journalistic!

Basing on the experience gained while implementing a long-term educational project "Young Journalists School"*



Lana Rudnik

Lana Rudnik – manager of educational program of the NGO "Center «The Third Sector»" (Hrodno), master's degree candidate of the European Humanitarian University.



"We cannot exceed what we are ... but what we are is much bigger than we think"

The Youth Journalism Festival "Your Style" has passed; it was arranged in association with the Public Association 'Belarusian Association of Journalists" to the 10th anniversary of our organization. The program offered many interesting and unusual events: presentation of web-resources and youth publications, workshops, contests and awards, YJSchool-leaving party, school-leavers' meetings, presentation "Catalogue of the Best School-leavers and Lectures", performances, show 'Venetian Memories" and of course much emotion.

Each time when we "release" a class we feel happy and sad at the same time. We are happy because we have managed to finish, to learn much and to experience together. We are sad because we have to say "good bye" to a nice team and friendly surrounding which shaped while studying.

The 10th anniversary of the project "Young Journalists School" is a good reason to think about what we managed to do for this time. Purposely I do not want to focus on typical problems which each public organization faces in our country. As it is said, "there are few reasons to feel happy" but there is a desire… to be happy. This time I am happy for me personally and my organization which has managed to maintain its reputation for long time.

The 10th anniversary. 200 school-leavers. Over 1000 publications. About 20 educational newspapers, about 20 mature lecturers. What stands behind these figures? The statistics is relative. All numbers should be treated in comparison or in the ration to others. But what could be they are compared to? This project is one among few in Belarus…

About Project's Background and People Who Implemented It

The project "Young Journalists School" is being implemented by one of the oldest public associations in Belarus "The Center for Information Support to Civic Initiatives «The Third sector»", grounded by Hrodno civic activists and journalists in 1997.

The organization works for the benefit of various groups' civic activity development by implementing information, education and outreach programs.

* Руднік Л. Шалёныя! Маладыя! Жжжжурналістыя! З уласнага досведу рэалізацыі доўгатэрмінвага навучальнага праекта "Школа маладога жуналіста" // Адукатар №2 (12), 2007. – С. 31–34.

"YJS is what recalls pleasant memo–ries and nostalgia. The project helped me fins a lodgment in profession and understand it is MINE."

(A. Gushtyn — "YJS–9").

We have started this project in Mach 1997 in association with the "Youth Press-Club" and newspaper "Pahonia" ("Chase").

I can speak a lot about people engaged in the project – they have different jobs (journalists, philologists, historians, psychologists, lowers), they differ in their views, life style, but what unites them is fresh thinking, democracy values and active citizenship.

Those who work for "YJS" can be divided into three types: trainers, experts and organizers.

The trainer's role (not necessary a journalist) supposes first of all ability to organize educational process: to get a lesson ready, to set trustful surrounding in a group, to help an expert to set a discussion and group work, and to summarize results.

The experts (in our situation they were journalists and editors-in-chief of some city mass-media) are responsible for content (understanding terminology, main rules and schemes, comments to tasks, which students make at classes, valuable advising, etc.).

The ideal situation is when expert and trainer work in pair while preparing for the classes and making evaluation.

The organizer's objectives (project's curator) are to ensure all necessary terms for trainers' and experts' work, keep his/her finger on the pulse of group's life, organize monitoring of publications, be in contact with editorial staff, and carry out other responsibilities on organizing educational process.

More Than Just a School of Journalism

The initial idea of the project was a training of salaried correspondents and freelances to work for mass-media and issues of public associations and initiatives. But we understood soon that journalism is not just a profession. Journalism is a position and great school for civic education which trains active citizens. Citizens who are efficient and useful in their community, able to interact and communicate, make decisions, critically analyze information, solve conflicts and anticipate a situation. Thus, another project objective is development of civic engagement of the youth, increasing its engagement in civic life.



YJS is a project aimed at the adult who share the responsibility for education success.

YJS is a project which cannot be implemented without partnership with editorial staff of mass-media, journalists and civic activists.

YJS is a noncommercial project which supposes free-of-charge education.

YJS is a project which stimulates Belarusian identity. The majority of classes at School are conducted in Belarusian.

For those who are 16 or older …

20–25 people aged from 16 to 25 from Hrodno become students of the YJS each year. Such age requirements we set when announce next entrance to the program. Of course, there are exceptions but usually students and schoolchildren of leaving forms (10–11) make basis of

"YJS suddenly opened me doors to interesting and creative activity. Meetings, various events, people and VIPs, travels around Belarus and abroad gave me many story–lines and characters. These are the most interesting years of my life, lived fascinating and emotional owing to profession of journalist."

(T. Zaleskaya — "YJS–2").

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each class.

Announcement for new entrance to the School we usually make in September by placing advertisements in local mass-media, educational establishments, by e-mailing Civic Life Chronicles of Hrodno region. We do not need to deny such an information channel as vulgarly-called "OWS" ("one woman said") which is getting more and more popular (!) under ideologically-controlled press and impeded access to the majority of mass-media.

The School entrance lasts 3 through 4 weeks, during this period applicants are to fill-in application forms and enlist to interview.

It happened so that 100 people competed for 25 places and thus a schedule of interviews was rather tense.

Several journalists – future lecturers of the School, coordinators of educational and organizational part of the project are usually invited for interviews. Each member of the "panel" has a table with criteria according with which a candidate is evaluated: publications in school newspapers or mass-media, motivations to participate in the project, understanding of civic life, awareness of mass-media market and communication skills.

The main aim of the interview is providing assistance in revealing potential of each candidate, identification his/her abilities in informal surrounding (it is difficult to do it basing just on a questionnaire). This aim is also pursued by giving creative tasks to many students at interview (those who have published materials are released from this task).

Creative tasks are usually of two kinds: continue a message or make a brief interview in a pair. A summarized mark on interview and creative task results is a passing grade to participate in the project.

We used to make two kinds of lists: main and reserve. It happens often that a person due to various reasons cannot proceed studying and then we involve "reservists".

> "The School has opened up a whole new world to me, gave me many new friends and teachers in life and keeps on granting young Hrodno generation with knowledge and warmness."
>
> **(S. Kuznaitsov — "YJS–3").**

At the first schools we made testing for vocational aptitude (it was possible to get such service at the City Vocational Guidance Center, but later on we became sure that results of this testing is far not objective: "the best" according to the test results happened not able to write even an article and talented journalists come out of "the worst".

There are many well known names in the city and Belarussian journalism among our school graduates – Pavel Mazheika, Inga Astrausova, Alena Sinevich, Julia Darashkevich, Dzenis Kurchevski, Tatsiana Zalevskaya, Volha Venskaya, Alena Stasjukevich, Zmitser Yagorau, Maryia Sadouskaya, Ales Zaleuski, Volha Buevich, Alena Pronskaya, Siargei Biaganski, Valeri Ruselik and others.

The Concept in Brief

Study program of the "Young Journalist School" is made by the following parts: introduction, communication and journalism basics legal and ethic aspects of journalism.

At introduction classes we make acquaintance to each other, talk about what journalism is and what journalists' functions are, which role mass-media means have in society.

A special section is dedicated to communication and in particular to listening skills, in available form to present information and specify the sense of the information obtained, understand the reasons for communication barriers, etc.

At the basics for journalism classes we are introduced to the main journalism genre, learn how to make introductions and headings for the texts. There are also more specific classes, for example, informing about civic and political life, business and economic news or cultural events, eco-journalism, etc.

An integrated element of this program part is apprenticeship in local mass-media (usually for two weeks) and publication of educational newspapers (usually we establish two editing offices; each of them publishes 2–3 issues of its newspaper).

The next part of classes is dedicated to legal and ethic aspects of journalist work. At these classes we speak about rights and responsibilities of journalists, about traps which can catch inexperienced journalists.

Much attention is paid to discussing journalist ethics

(we have also developed own code of conduct for students of YJS). This program block of YJS is very important – from the very beginning our young journalists start writing messages, associate with editorial staffs and our objective is to warn them against possible mistakes and unpleasant situations coming out of ignorance of legislation regulating journalists work and defined norms of ethics.

Learn Differently

Study process at “Young Journalists School” strongly differs from traditional forms education at secondary and high schools. Study process supposes interactive methods and principals of adult education. We rely on a fact that we are dealing with people motivated to learn, ready to be active in learning new, in mastering new skills. We take an individual approach to each student, as each student works at his/her own pace. The learning process is based at a scheme “from simple (cognitive) to complex” and at principals of multisensority, interactions and stimulating feedback.

By drafting study technique for each class we proceed from learning by doing principle. According to David Kolb every person has his or her own individual way to learn. Somebody, for example, learn better by experimenting, somebody prefers quiet reading books or watching other people. Because of it at our classes we are likely to create opportunities for getting exact experience (for example – taking interview) and for observing and reflecting (onlooking the interview) and for abstract conceptualization (what was done good; what needs improving; what shall I do in this situation) and for making experiments with information got. The students should leave the classes enriched with knowledge and this makes a basis of the methods which we use at classes for young journalists.

> “YJS is much more than just experience in journalism for me. There I got friends with whom I still keep in touch, learned pro–active living attitude. This is invaluable experience, I thank fortune for that.”
>
> **(L. Asakovich — “YJS–3”).**

Interactive methods suppose common learning (learning in cooperation): both participants and trainers are active agents of learning process. The aim of classes is not just getting knowledge and skills but changing/improving behavioral models. Gaining new experience, observing own reactions and behavior of other participants of study process, a person changes his/her behavioral model and consciously master it.

Interactive methods let to involve not just person’s consciousness but also his or her feelings and emotions, that in its turn lets to improve quality of mastering information. We stimulate our participants to be active in different ways: make discussions, offer and discuss life situations; much time is given to group work.



Interactive methods are also valuable because they develop communicative skills. In contrast to traditional for the majority of educational establishments one-way communication where a role of teacher supposes giving information and role of students is passive reception, at YJS we cultivate a diversified communication. Trainer’s role is for setting discussions, stimulating critical thinking, encourage students to sound their positions. All participants of the study process are interacting with each other, exchange information, solve problems together, simulate real life situations and evaluate colleagues’ and own activity.

Usual study program at YJS lasts 6–7 months. Classes take place twice a week in the evening and last 2 hours each. We have another experience and envisaged classes in different way (for example, first group has studied 3 months and in 2003/2004 two deep 5-day training courses and practical classes in between replaced everyday classes) but experience showed that healthy babies are born at the end of 7th month of pregnancy. Oops, of course, journalist’s ☺

Each lesson requires careful preparation: starting from aiming and setting tasks, drafting content, choosing methods, framework terms and through hand-outs and envisaging other resources.

The first that our students need to learn is to learn to read, to analyze what is read and of course to write. Students draft materials for mass-media and this is an essential condition for participation in the project (for a year we →



have about 100 printed materials). Occasionally young journalists face a problem to fine a subject and in this situation "The Hot Pan" which we use at the end of the classes comes to rescue. It is a kind of "brain storming" when students, trainers and experts sound the possible subjects together, name various events and facts, which could be a strong information basis for journalist materials.

Study at YJS exceeds the time frames of the classes. Great attention is given to individual work – consultations, recommendations to written materials. Such consultations let students to master the secrets of journalism art, to feel more confident at this stage when they do not have strong contacts with journalists and editors, do not have a clear idea about publications specific. There are a lot of questions and problems especially at the first stage. And success of learning depends on how comfortable the atmosphere, interesting lecturers and respectful culture is.

Every student should have at least 5 publications issued while studying to get a certificate. As a rule, more than 2/3 of students succeed to do it.

What makes us possible to say – does our project succeed or not? The indicators which we target evaluating each group results are as follows: a number of publications, relevancy for the project (participation in issuing education newspapers, participation in civic initiatives and organizations) and also their employment at mass-media editorial staff, engagement in activity of various NGOs. Each third alumnus is linked to journalism or civic activity.

It is nice if while project implementation besides methodical basis, good team (often ready to work on volunteer basis) and other needed resources there are "tidbits" typical just for you. By each group efforts we had different ones every time – celebrations, parties and other common events which allow to feel the taste of non-formal education.

We finish as a rule with a gala Reception where we hand over the certificates and thank our lecturers.

Hope for future cooperation. There is YJS-11 ahead!

Translated by Victoria Dronova

short information

"Young Journalist School"

- The program of public association "Civic Initiatives Information Support Center "The Third Sector". It has been implemented since 1997. It supposes training for salaried and freelance correspondents for mass–media and Hrodno NGOs' publication, stirring so–cial commitment of the youth.
- The program is implemented as every–year 7–month projects under the common title "Young Journalist School". The students (young people of 16 to 25 of age) take a course "Journalism Basics" have trial pe–riods at Hrodno mass–media, publish own education newspapers. Since March 2007 the weekly Internet¯newspaper and Internet–radio "Your Style" (**www.t–styl.info**) have been started within the project frames.
- Two sub–projects "Youth Information Agency" and "Trouble Addresses" were implemented within the project frames. The subproject "Youth Information Agency" has been implemented since 1998 and supposed that School's students make journalistic materials on city and country life. Every year about 100 publications elaborated by YJS's students which are published in Hrodno all–Belarusian mass–media.
- The sub–project "Trouble Addresses" was implemented in 1998¯1999 and was aimed at drawing attention to people in crisis and their problems.
- The students of "Young Journalist School–3" and "Young Journalist School–4" visited or–phan asylums, hospitals, specialized estab–lishments and public organizations engaged in helping people in trouble. The project outcomes were dozens of publications in city mass–media dedicated to people in troubles.
- Young Journalist School–8 implemented in 2003/2004 was aimed at training corre–spondents for local mass–media and press–secretaries for Hrodno NGOs. Young people from Hrodho, Smargon, Lida and Slonim participated in in the project.
- Since 1997 about 200 people have participat–ed in the project "Young Journalist School". Almost each third alumnus of "Young Jour–nalist School" up to now works for mass–media or NGOs in Belarus or abroad.
- The Youth Journalism Festival "Your Style" took place in May 2007 in Hrodno in honor of the 10th anniversary of the School. It was organized in association with the public as–sociation "Belarusian Association of Jour–nalists". About 100 people participated.